ANNUAL REPORT

of the

STANDING COMMITTEE

on

COMMUNITY SERVICES

2004 - 2005

Third and Fourth Sitting in the First Session of the Fifty-Ninth General Assembly

106-04059/

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Printed and Published by the Queens Printer
Halifax

ISSN : 1705-9011

This document is also available on the Internet at the following address:

http://www.gov.ns.ca/legislature/COMMITTEES/cs_pubs.html

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House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

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Hon. Murray Scott
Speaker
House of Assembly
Province House
Halifax, Nova Scotia

Dear Mr. Speaker,

On behalf of the Standing Committee on Community Services, I am pleased to submit the Annual Report of the Committee for the Third and Fourth Sitting in the First Session of the Fifty-Ninth General Assembly.

Respectfully submitted

Marilyn More

Marilyn More, MLA
(Dartmouth South - Portland Valley)
Chair
Standing Committee on Community Services

Halifax, Nova Scotia
February 2006

Printed on paper that contains recycled fibre

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INTRODUCTION

The Standing Committee on Community Services, an all-party Committee of the House of Assembly, was struck at the beginning of the First Session of the Fifty-Ninth General Assembly. Pursuant to Rule 60(2)(d) of the ***Province of Nova Scotia Rules and Forms of Procedures of the House of Assembly:***

> **(d)** the Community Services Committee is established for the purpose of considering matters normally assigned to or within the purview of the Departments and Ministers of Business and Consumer Services and of Municipal Affairs and matters relating to the Human Rights Commission and the Nova Scotia Sport and Recreation Commission[1]

In 1998, the Speaker, as Chairman of the Legislature's Internal Economy Board, gave the Community Services Committee written permission to also consider matters within the purview of the Department of Health and the Department of Community Services.[2]

MEMBERSHIP

The membership of the Community Services Committee currently is as follows:

Mrs. Marilyn More, MLA - Chair
Dartmouth South – Portland Valley

Dr. Mark Parent, MLA - Vice Chair
Kings North

Mr. Bill Langille, MLA
Colchester North

Mr. Gary Hines, MLA
Waverley – Fall River – Beaver Bank

Mr. Jerry Pye, MLA
Dartmouth North

Mr. Gordie Gosse, MLA
Cape Breton North

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[1] Province of Nova Scotia Rules and Forms of Procedure of the House of Assembly, July 1999, Rule 60(2)(d) Page 61.

[2] Nova Scotia, Letter from the Speaker to the Chairperson of the Standing Committee on Community Services, August 27, 1998

MEMBERSHIP

Mr. Russell MacKinnon, MLA
Cape Breton West

Mr. Stephen McNeil, MLA
Annapolis

Mr. Leo Glavine, MLA
Kings West

MEMBERSHIP CHANGES

During the session the Committee underwent membership changes. These changes were as follows:

Mr. Russell MacKinnon, MLA - Cape Breton West was replaced by;
Ms. Diana Whalen, MLA - Halifax Clayton Park

PROCEDURES AND OPERATIONS

The Community Services Committee traditionally meets once a month. These meetings are held on the second Thursday of the month in the Legislative Committees Office. During the Third and Fourth Sitting of the First Session of the Fifty-Ninth General Assembly the Committee met on the following dates:

June 24, 2004
September 16, 2004
October 14, 2004
October 28, 2004
November 25, 2004
January 27, 2005
February 24, 2005 (3 meetings)
March 31, 2005
June 2, 2005
June 23, 2005

NOTICES

Notices of the Committee meetings are sent to all members of the Committee, staff of the caucus offices, the Legislative staff and the House of Assembly Press Gallery. The notices are also posted in Province House and are on the Committees' web-site at the following address:

http://www.gov.ns.ca/legislature/committees/schedcs.html

VERBATIM TRANSCRIPTS

Transcripts of all Community Services Committee meetings are available from the Legislative Library in Province House, the Legislative Committees Office or on-line at the Community Services Committees' web page at the following address:

http://www.gov.ns.ca/legislature/hansard/comm/cs/

RESEARCH MATERIAL

All research for the Community Services Committee is compiled by the Committee's clerk, and distributed to the members. Reference material is placed in binders and distributed one week prior to meetings. A copy of this material is also made available to the witnesses appearing before the Committee, the Legislative Library in Province House and to Hansard Recording Services.

ANNUAL REPORTS

All reports from the Community Services Committee are compiled and written by the Committee's clerk. The draft is then sent to the individual Committee members for consideration. Upon completion of the review and approval of the Report, the Chairman tables the Report with the Clerk of the House.

Distribution of the report is as follows: to the Speaker/Clerk of the House, all members of the Legislature, all witnesses that appeared before the Committee, the Legislative Library in Nova Scotia and in all other provinces and territories, the caucus offices and the Media. This report is also available to the general public upon request through the Legislative Committees Office or on-line at the Committee's web page at the following address:

http://www.gov.ns.ca/legislature/COMMITTEES/cs_pubs.html

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Committee wishes to extend its gratitude to witnesses for their time and cooperation; Ms. Mora Stevens, clerk of the Community Services Committee and the staff of the Legislative Committees Office for the organization of research for Committee meetings. Others whose assistance has been invaluable to the Committee are: Mr. Robert Kinsman, Editor of Hansard, and Hansard staff; Mr. James MacInnes, Coordinator/Director Legislative Television and Broadcast Services, and staff; Ms. Margaret Murphy, Legislative Librarian, and staff.

WITNESSES

Thursday, June 24, 2004 (AM)

Avalon Sexual Assault Centre
Ms. Irene Smith – Executive Director

Men's Prevention Program
Mr. Ron Kelly – Co-Director New Leaf (Pictou)
Ms. Nancy Gray – New Start (Halifax)

Thursday, June 24, 2004

Forum on Family Violence – Round Table Discussion

Avalon Sexual Assault Centre
Ms. Irene Smith – Executive Director
Ms. Serena Ali – Member of the Board of Directors

Men's Prevention Program
Mr. Ron Kelly – Co-Director New Leaf (Pictou)
Ms. Nancy Gray – New Start (Halifax)

Transition House Association of Nova Scotia (THANS)
Ms. Pamela Harrison – Coordinator - THANS
Ms. Lyn Barrett – Executive Director – Bryony House
Ms. Shirley Oickle – Executive Director – Harbour House
Ms. Bea LeBlanc – Executive Director – Cape Breton Transition House Association
Ms. Suzanne White – Executive Director – Citizens Against Spousal Abuse
Ms. Tammy Lee Vautour – Executive Director – Naomi Society
Ms. Starlynn Shears – Executive Director – Third Place
Ms. Rhonda Fraser – Executive Director – Chrysalis House
Ms. Elaine Smith – Executive Director – Juniper House
Ms. Shelagh Rayworth – Executive Director – Autumn House
Ms. Mary Elizabeth Cameron – Staff – Leeside Transition House

Women's Centres CONNECT !
Ms. Peggy Mahon – Coordinator
Ms. Lucille Harper – Antigonish Women's Resources Centre
Ms. Louise Smith-MacDonald – Every Woman's Centre
Ms. Myrene Keating-Owen – Lea Place Women's Centre

Women's Centres CONNECT !
Ms. Bernadette MacDonald – Pictou County Women's Centre
Ms. Rhonda Haines-Richards – Second Story Women's Centre
Ms. Della Longmire – The Women's Place
Ms. Dianne Crowell – Tri-County Women's Centre
Ms. Krista Poole – Central Nova Women's Resources Centre

Thursday, September 16, 2004

Community Action on Homelessness
Ms. Angela Bishop – Community Liaison
Mr. Wayne MacNaughton – Member of the group's Steering Committee

Thursday, October 14, 2004

Cost Recovery of Social Assistance Overpayments
Department of Community Services
Ms. Marion Tyson – Deputy Minister
Ms. Tracey Williams – Executive Director - Programs
Mr. Harold Dillon – Senior Director - Employment Support and Income Assistance and Housing
Ms. Janet Rathbun – Director of Income Assistance
Mr. Dave Ryan – Senior Project Director

Communications Nova Scotia
Ms. Vicki Fraser – Communications Advisor

Thursday, October 28, 2004

Valley Autism Support Team
Mr. Norman J. Donovan – Director
Ms. Janet Kroetch – Member

Autism Association of Nova Scotia
Ms. Vicki Harvey – Executive Director
Ms. Jo-Lynn Fenton – Vice President Autism Society of Canada (Nova Scotia Representative)
Ms. Michelle Gardner – President – Autism PDD Society of Cape Breton

Thursday, November 25, 2004	**Department of Health – Home Care** Ms. Cheryl Doiron – Deputy Minister Mr. Keith Menzies – Executive Director – Continuing Care Ms. Kathy Greenwood – Director – Service and Business Support
	YWCA Ms. Brenda Sanderson – President Ms. Sue Wolstenholme – Executive Director – Operations
Thursday, January 27, 2005	**Nova Scotia Children's Aid Societies** Mr. Jack Coffin - Chair, Presidents and Executive Directors Group and President, Cape Breton-Victoria Children's Aid Society Ms. Marie Boone - Executive Director, Cape Breton – Victoria Children's Aid Society Ms. Doreen Beaton - Chair, Board of Directors – Inverness-Richmond Children's Aid Society Mr. Mark Mander - President, Family and Children's Services - Kings County Children's Aid Society Mr. Robert Myles - Executive Director, Family and Children's Services - Kings County Children's Aid Society
Thursday, February 24, 2005	**Alternative Transportation Services Societies** Mr. Claredon Robicheau - Chair, Nova Scotia League for Equal Opportunities and the Founder and volunteer Manager of Le Transport de Clare Ms. Jen Powley - Provincial Coordinator, Nova Scotia League for Equal Opportunities Ms. Rhia Perkins - Provincial Secretary – Nova Scotia League for Equal Opportunities

Thursday, February 24, 2004	**Forum on Family Violence (Part II)** **Department of Community Services** Ms. Judith Ferguson, Assistant Deputy Minister Mr. George Savoury, Senior Director, Family and Children's Services **Department of Justice** Mr. Douglas Keefe, Q.C., Deputy Minister Ms. Stephanie MacInnis-Langley, Manager, Special Initiatives for Victims **Department of Health** Ms. Cheryl Doiron, Deputy Minister Mr. Robert Turnbull, Provincial Coordinator, Adult Protection Services **Advisory Council on the Status of Women** Ms. Doreen Paris, Chair Ms. Brigitte Neumann, Executive Director
Thursday, March 31, 2005	**Grandparents Rights For Nova Scotia Association** Mrs. Pauline Glenn - Chair Mrs. Thelma Gillispie - Secretary/Treasurer Mr. Gordon Stoodley - Acting Vice-Chairman Mr. Howard Glenn - Member Mr. Brian Gillispie - Member Mrs. Betty Stoodley - Member
Thursday, June 2, 2005	**Youth in Care Newsletter Project** Mr. Andrew Safer – Project Manager / Facilitator Ms. Ammy Purcell Ms. Cyndi Rafuse Mr. Tony Beaumier Mr. John Walker
Thursday, June 23, 2005	**Setting the Fall 2005 Agenda**

PUBLIC

HEARINGS

Avalon Sexual Assault Centre

Thursday, June 24, 2004

WITNESSES

Avalon Sexual Assault Centre

Ms. Irene Smith
Executive Director

BACKGROUND

The Avalon Sexual Assault Centre is the one in the Halifax Regional Municipality. The Centre is a registered, not-for-profit, community based charitable organization. The Centre was established in 1983 in order to provide a leadership role in ending all forms of sexual violence against women and children. The Centre is committed to providing support programs, counselling, education and advocacy for women affected by sexual violence. The Centre is dedicated to eliminating sexual violence, social injustice and other forms of oppression.

The Centre has been involved in research projects, such as working with the police and prosecution services, to respond to investigate and prosecute cases of sexual violence.

MATTERS OF DISCUSSION

The Committee went into details on the following matters:

Funding – Funding from the Department of Community Services, calls and counselling sessions per year, hours of services provided, funding envelope transition and core funding;

Halifax Regional Police Department - working with the Halifax Regional Police Department, reporting of sexual assaults;

Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE) Program - 24-hour a day service, on call nurse, funded by the Department of Health, responding to any immediate sexual assault – 13 years of age and over, IWK child protection team, SANE Program Advisory Committee comprised of the Halifax Regional Police, RCMP, Public Prosecution Service and community-based agencies and three Halifax health care facilities;

Lack of Resources - lack of resources for outreach services, need for diverse groups, including the black community, First Nations and immigrant communities that are looking for outreach services and resources, services are specifically focused on individuals affected by sexual violence, tools used to make referrals to the other organizations for family violence; and

Restorative Justice – working with the Department of Justice, breakdown of the current system of restorative justice.

REQUEST FOR DOCUMENTATION

The Committee did not request any additional information from the witnesses.

TRANSCRIPT

A copy of this meeting transcript is available from the Legislative Committees Office or available on-line at the following address, pages 1-21 (9:00am - 10:34am)

http://www.gov.ns.ca/legislature/hansard/comm/cs/cs_2004jun24.htm

Men's Prevention Program

Thursday, June 24, 2004

WITNESSES

Men's Prevention Program

Mr. Ron Kelly
Director New Leaf (Pictou)

Ms. Nancy Gray
New Start (Halifax)

BACKGROUND

There are six funded men's intervention programs in Nova Scotia – **New Start** in Halifax, **Alternatives** in Bridgewater, **Bridges** in Truro, **New Directions** in Amherst, **New Leaf** in New Glasgow and **Second Chance** in Sydney. In addition, there has always been a close working relationship with the men's program offered by the **Mi'kmaq Family Healing Centres**.

The Association of Men's Intervention Programs (AIMP) is a coalition of Nova Scotia's six funded men's intervention programs that started in 1991, with primary funding coming from the Department of Community Services. Due to funding concerns in 2002, the Men's Prevention Programs, Transition House Associations and the Women's Centres have become partners in order to have a stronger voice on the provincial level to ensure the programs' survival.

Each of the programs mentioned above grew out the individual community's needs consequently, each programs is different in nature and has a diverse outlook and approach to men's issues. Each program answers to a voluntary board of directors. All of the programs are guided by a set of provincial Standards of Practice. The Men's Prevention Programs use a feminist philosophy and approach, and share the common objectives of women's equality and safety by ending violence against women and addressing the effects of abuse within intimate relationships.

MATTERS OF DISCUSSION

The Committee discussed the following matters in detail with the witnesses:

Core Programs and Services for Men - services for men who have abusive behaviours, group counselling, individual counselling, support services, suitability assessments and interviews, case conferencing, referrals and information, community education programs, awareness, advocacy, multi-agency coordination and linkages, college, university and theological student supervision, training for professional staff from the Departments of Justice and Community Services and community police departments;

Services for Women - services for partners or ex-partners of abusive men, safety planning, demystification of men's programming, group and individual counselling, partners' contacts and safety checks, advocacy and support services, information and referrals;

Program Challenges - waiting list for services, clients with multiple problems, no tolerance policy of the police departments, age of abusers, mental health services offered to abusers;

Partnership - partnering with multiple organizations, removing gaps in services and barriers between the programs, networking with various agencies in order to meet the needs of the communities throughout Nova Scotia;

Drug Abuse - increasing drug use with men's prevention program clientele, prescription drug abuse problem in Cape Breton, Second Chance facility;

Educational Programs – use of facilitators in discussions about dating violence, violence in general and healthy relationships, interactive program, participation amongst the students, media influence on students, police pro-arrest policy;

Geographical Location - geographical isolation of abuse victims, cost of services to small communities; and

Grants – availability of grants from various non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and foundations, application and paperwork problems, possible access to the government's knowledge concerning applications to such organizations.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CONSIDERATION FROM THE WITNESSES

The Men's Prevention Programs, Women's Centres and the Transition House Association of Nova Scotia have formed a coalition to deal with the Department of Community Services after the provincial budget cut their funding, The funding was restored, but it has never been returned to the budget as a regular line item. This is a troubling fact to the Associations. The Organizations put together a report containing a number of recommendations that seem to have been ignored by the Department of Community Services in their response.

The Men's Prevention Program put forward the following six recommendations to the Department of Community Services and reiterated their importance to the Committee:

1. All existing programs be maintained and supported with full and sustainable funding from the Department (Community Services);

2. Discussions commence re: branch offices or additional resources for full provincial coverage;

3. The Department (Community Services) assist us (Men's Prevention Program) by facilitating requests for federal funding to support additional programming and research into best practices;

4. Department (Community Services) assist us (Men's Prevention Program) with the establishment of a communication infrastructure to support a sound information system;

5. Department (Community Services) further assist us (Men's Prevention Program) to improve our efficiency by allowing us to explore options for free programming space, support staff, research expertise, etc; and

6. Most importantly, we (Men's Prevention Program) recommend that the Department of Community Services work with the Association of Men's Intervention Programs to develop a framework for looking at the issue of family violence.

REQUEST FOR DOCUMENTATION

The Committee requested that the following information be forwarded to it:

A listing of the variety of drugs that the Men's Prevention Program has been dealing with that have been consumed by the Program's clientele.

TRANSCRIPT

A copy of this meeting transcript is available from the Legislative Committees Office or available on-line at the following address, pages 22-38 (10:34 am – 11:55 am):

http://www.gov.ns.ca/legislature/hansard/comm/cs/cs_2004jun24.htm

Forum on Family Violence (Part I)

Thursday, June 24, 2004

WITNESSES

Avalon Sexual Assault Centre
Ms. Irene Smith
Executive Director

Ms. Serena Ali
Member of the Board of Directors

Men's Prevention Program
Mr. Ron Kelly
Director New Leaf (Pictou)

Ms. Nancy Gray
New Start (Halifax)

Transition House Association of Nova Scotia (THANS)
Ms. Pamela Harrison
Coordinator - THANS

Ms. Lyn Barrett
Executive Director – Bryony House

Ms. Shirley Oickle
Executive Director – Harbour House

Ms. Bea LeBlanc
Executive Director – Cape Breton Transition House Association

Ms. Suzanne White
Executive Director – Citizens Against Spousal Abuse

Ms. Tammy Lee Vautour
Executive Director – Naomi Society

Ms. Starlynn Shears
Executive Director – Third Place

Ms. Rhonda Fraser
Executive Director – Chrysalis House

Ms. Elaine Smith
Executive Director – Juniper House

Ms. Shelagh Rayworth
Executive Director – Autumn House

Ms. Mary Elizabeth Cameron
Staff – Leeside Transition House

Women's Centres CONNECT !

Ms. Peggy Mahon
Coordinator

Ms. Lucille Harper
Antigonish Women's Resources Centre

Ms. Louise Smith-MacDonald
Every Woman's Centre

Ms. Myrene Keating-Owen
Lea Place Women's Centre

Ms. Bernadette MacDonald
Pictou County Women's Centre

Ms. Rhonda Haines-Richards
Second Story Women's Centre

Ms. Della Longmire
The Women's Place

Ms. Dianne Crowell
Tri-County Women's Centre

Ms. Krista Poole
Central Nova Women's Resources Centre

BACKGROUND

The Standing Committee on Community Services over the past year has heard from a number of organizations concerning family violence. The Committee determined that it would like to hold a forum in order to have a number of groups present at a round table to discuss the problem of family violence and the difficulties that the individual organizations are having in dealing with the government. In order to facilitate a meaningful round table discussion the following question was provided to each of the witnesses as a starting point for comments:

The Standing Committee on Community Services recognizes that all participants in this family violence forum are deeply committed to the provision of services for family violence prevention and intervention programs. The Committee also recognizes that there are limited resources that can be provided to strengthen and enhance services for women and men in Nova Scotia. As an introduction to the afternoon panel discussion, we request that your organizations respond to the following questions, using a ten-minute timeframe:

1. *How can members of the Standing Committee on Community Services support your organization(s) and ensure that the programs and services you provide can be strengthened and enhanced, without the expenditure of more government funds?*

2. *If there was a small increase in government funds for your organization(s) how can the members of the Standing Committee on Community Services support you and ensure that the programs and services you provide can be strengthened and enhanced?*

PRESENTATIONS

All of the organizations that were invited to attend the all-day forum were from the non-profit sector. These organizations made excellent presentations to the Committee. Detailed excerpts from each organization's presentation can be seen at the end of this report in the section entitled Family Violence Forums.

MATTERS OF DISCUSSION

The Committee went into detailed discussions on many matters. The following is a list of highlights from those discussions:

Funding – funding from the Department of Community Services, $5 million out of $756 million - four-fifths of 1 per cent of the total budget, possibility of grants in lieu of tax money on the properties, access to provincial phone rates or insurance coverage;

Relationship with the Department of Community Services - combative relationship between the coalition, the Department of Community Services and provincial government, possibility of working collectively and collaboratively with the Department of Community Services, regionalization of services, coalition partners' 12-page report tabled with the Department;

Interdepartmental Funding - possibility of multiple departments funding various parts of the budget for the coalition partners, joint planning committee with representatives from the Departments of Justice, Education, Community Services, and Health;

Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women - relationship between Nova Scotia's Advisory Council on the Status of Women and the coalition partners, predominantly at arm's length from government but advises government on women's issues, working on a grass roots level with community activists, dissolution of the Women's Directorate; and

Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) - United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination recommendation to establish a parliamentary committee on women's issues, watchdog at the federal level to be dealing with some of these issues of social program transfer monies, to establish conditions whereby the provinces would be made accountable for how those funds are being spent.

MOTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

After having in-depth discussions, the Standing Committee on Community Services is making the following recommendations to the provincial government as a whole, as well as specifically to the Department of Community Services concerning the overall government spending priorities. The Committee supports the following:

There shall be no closures, mandated amalgamations or cutbacks in services or programs offered by the coalition partners (THANS, Women's Centre CONNECT!, Men's Prevention Program and the Avalon Sexual Assault Centre);

Both service enhancements and improvements are essential;

Full, secure and sustainable funding must be guaranteed;

Community accountability and community leadership must be guaranteed; and

Each provincial organization requires operational funding.

The Standing Committee on Community Services also approved a motion stating their support of the organizations around the table and they recommend to the Government of Nova Scotia that, when considering spending priorities, the government must take into account the negative impact on women of recent cuts and changes to social programs and services, which is related to the CHST and the lack of conditions on social transfer, as well as the domestic and International Human Rights Law that guarantees equality to women in Canada.

The Committee also passed a motion to invite the Department of Community Services, the Department of Justice, the Department of Health, the Department of Education, representatives, perhaps, from the IWK, the Halifax Regional Police, the Law Reform Commission and any other associated stakeholder such as the Advisory Council on the Status of Women, to appear at an all-day forum when the Committee reconvenes in the Fall of 2004. The forum will be held in order to discuss this issue and to try to develop a coordinated government approach in funding to these organizations.

When the **Women's Centre CONNECT!** appeared before the Committee in May 2004 the Standing Committee passed a motion that was sent to the Department of Community Services. The Committee discussed this matter again and wishes to reiterate their support for the following:

Support women's centres' core services, in particular, recognition that women's centres' core services are distinct, essential, and integral to the community;

Network of services provided for women; recognition for women's centres' core services, which include direct services of individual support counselling and crisis intervention, information and referral, individual advocacy and accompaniment programs, outreach, community education, community development initiatives and networks;

Recognize and support the current demand by women for women's centres' core services and service improvements; in particular, full support and full funding for women's centres' core services that enable the staff complement as defined by each women's centre, in order to effectively deliver women's centres' core services; interdepartmental funding for re-entry training programs to be delivered by women's centres;

Support to find creative ways to effectively account for full benefits of the provincial government's investment in women's centres, full support and full funding for Women's Centres CONNECT! ; and

Recognize the strength of women's centres' current linkages and co-operation as integral to the delivery of our core services.

The Committee also supports putting forward the following recommendations from the individual organizations as follows:

The **Men's Prevention Program** put forward to the Committee the following six recommendations to the Department of Community Services and reiterated their importance to the Committee. The Committee, in turn passed a motion to again forward the recommendations to the Department of Community Services and ask them to start immediately the consultation process with the Program. The recommendations are as follows:

All existing programs be maintained and supported with full and sustainable funding from the Department (of Community Services);

Discussions commence re: branch offices or additional resources for full provincial coverage;

The Department (of Community Services) assist us (the Men's Prevention Program) by facilitating requests for federal funding to support additional programming and research into best practices;

The Department (of Community Services) assist us (the Men's Prevention Program) with the establishment of a communication infrastructure to support a sound information system;

The Department (of Community Services) further assist us (the Men's Prevention Program) to improve our efficiency by allowing us to explore options for free programming space, support staff, research expertise, etc; and

Most importantly, we (the Men's Prevention Program) recommend that the Department of Community Services work with the Association of Men's Intervention Programs to develop a framework for looking at the issue of family violence.

The Committee determined that they would send all the recommendations and suggestions that have come out of today's forum to the Department of Community Services, asking them to not only take action but to give the Committee, within four months' time, an update on what progress has been made concerning the recommendations.

REQUEST FOR DOCUMENTATION

Within the forum there was discussion surrounding the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, as well as the International Convention to Eliminate Discrimination Against Women, and the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women. The coalition partners wanted the Standing Committee on Community Services to consider supporting the establishment of a permanent parliamentary committee on women's issues to ensure compliance with CEDAW. The Committee asked the Coalition partners to draft a letter that could then be circulated to the Committee. This issue would then be looked at and considered at a later date.

TRANSCRIPT

A copy of this meeting transcript is available from the Legislative Committees Office or available on-line at the following address, from pages 38-78 (1:35 pm – 4:41 pm):

http://www.gov.ns.ca/legislature/hansard/comm/cs/cs_2004jun24.htm

Community Action on Homelessness

Thursday, September 16, 2004

WITNESSES

Community Action on Homelessness

Ms. Angela Bishop
Community Liaison

Mr. Wayne MacNaughton
Member of the group's Steering Committee

BACKGROUND

The Community Action on Homelessness (CAH) works toward sustaining community momentum to address homelessness. CAH works with community agencies to advance projects for funding. The CAH evaluates proposals, identifies gaps in community housing projects and informs agencies so that projects can be funded. This year the CAH has approximately $2 million to allocate in support of community initiatives.

The CAH asked to appear before the Committee after reading the transcript from the Committee's meeting with the Department of Community Services concerning the Canada Nova Scotia Affordable Housing Agreement on March 4, 2004.

MATTERS OF DISCUSSION

Funding Non-Profit Volunteer Groups - funding for operational purposes, long-term operations security, time and effort going into to securing funds;

Canada-Nova Scotia Affordable Housing Agreement - signed September 13, 2002, funding from both levels of government - $37.26 million for 1500 housing units, 26 housing units completed, studying ways to spend the money as efficient as possible, few projects are under construction;

Bilateral Housing Agreement (BHA) - not designed to address homelessness, no specific standards for each of the projects;

Shelter Allowance Rates - large amount of migration to HRM from rural area of Nova Scotia, lack of housing units in rural areas, components in social assistance for shelter - $235.00 per month since 2001;

Halifax Regional Municipalities (HRM) – Portrait on Homelessness - completed in 2003, subsequently a follow-up has been completed and released, homelessness and waiting lists for those homes in HRM is steadily rising;

Interfaith Housing - Nova Scotia churches formed an Interfaith Council, Interfaith housing program, non-profit housing providers throughout the province, community access to housing, challenges in supporting the housing units, not being able to maintain properties, selling off units in order to have enough funds to repair other;

National Homelessness Initiative - federal government program, identifying and transferring non-profit organizations surplus land, owned by the governments, at below market prices;

Home Ownership - home ownership incentive programs;

Vacancy Rates - rural areas that have higher vacancy rates in non-profit housing units, conditions of property, out migration from the communities;

Housing Conditions - housing units in deplorable conditions, Residential Tenancies Act, slum landlords, licensing system in place, violations; and

Determinant in Homelessness - mental health issues, addictions and lack of education.

MOTION

The Committee approved the following witnesses to appear before them in the future:

Breakfast for Learning Program
Ms. Debbie Madore – Nutrition for Learning Program Coordinator
Cape Breton – Victoria Regional School Board
and a representative from the Nova Scotia School Boards Association

The Committee also approved writing a letter of support for the Youth-in-Care Newsletter Project. This letter will be used by the Youth-in-Care Newsletter Project to help aid in their fund raising campaign.

REQUEST FOR DOCUMENTATION

The Committee did not request any additional documentation from the witnesses.

TRANSCRIPT

A copy of this meeting transcript is available at the Legislative Committees Office or on-line at the following address:

http://www.gov.ns.ca/legislature/hansard/comm/cs/cs_2004sep16.htm

Cost Recovery of Social Assistance Overpayment

Thursday, October 14, 2004

WITNESSES

Department of Community Services

Ms. Marion Tyson
Deputy Minister

Ms. Tracey Williams
Executive Director - Programs

Mr. Harold Dillon
Senior Director Employment Support and Income Assistance and Housing

Ms. Janet Rathbun
Director of Income Assistance

Mr. Dave Ryan
Senior Project Director

Communications Nova Scotia

Ms. Vicki Fraser
Communications Advisor

BACKGROUND

The Department of Community Services was asked to appear before the Committee concerning the collection of overpayments in the Social Assistance Program run by the Department. The Department gave a detailed explanation of the program and the methods used in the cost recovery process. The following is an outline of the program, which is stated here so that there can be a greater understanding of the problem.

Cost Recovery on Social Assistance Overpayments
The Department of Community Services is responsible for administering the Employment Support and Income Assistance Program, which provides financial assistance to persons in need and also provides employment supports to encourage independence and self-sufficiency. The Income Assistance Program expenditures last year totalled $231 million and served approximately 33,000 heads of households across the province and their families. In addition to meeting the clients' basic needs and shelter requirements, we also provide, under the programs, special needs items such as prescriptions or Pharmacare, childcare and transportation for employment-based activities and other special needs.

Through the Employment Support Program, employability assessments were provided to assist clients in determining their level of job readiness and also help them determine the supports that are necessary to assist with their action plan to move toward employment and sustainability.

In the delivery of the program, a small percentage of clients annually may wind up in a situation where they receive more money than they are entitled to which may result in an overpayment situation being created. The Department strives to balance meeting the needs of clients with compassion and accountability for public

funds. Good case management includes not only appropriate and respectful assessments but is essential for case planning to assist individuals in managing all aspects of their lives. This includes prevention of situations that could result in overpayments. Programs are designed to foster self-reliance and achievement of their long-term goals, which includes responsibility for their own financial management.

The definition of an overpayment, as taken from the Act, defines an overpayment as a debt due by the recipient, or the estate of a recipient, to Her Majesty in right of the province. There are three ways that an income assistance overpayment is created. The first one is in an effort to meet the urgent needs of clients, they may be overpaid. One example would be the provision of emergency fuel or power arrears to ensure a family has the necessary shelter requirements. If they had already received their full entitlement, the amount paid is charged as an overpayment and recovered in monthly installments. Another example is the provision of assistance to individuals pending receipt of Canada Pension Plan benefits. The Income Assistance Program covers this time period until the Canada Pension Plan benefits are granted. A second reason would be assistance paid to a client in error could result in an overpayment. The Employment Support and Income Assistance Act limits the recovery of these types of overpayments and that would be to up $45 a month. An example of that would be if the changes to their income or their situation were not calculated properly. The third reason would be misrepresentation by a client to obtain assistance for which they are not entitled, which can result in an overpayment. An example would be non-disclosure of income or other circumstances that would change the amount of their financial eligibility.

How Overpayments are Identified and Prevented - Through ongoing case management, the income assistance caseworker maintains documentation relating to the client's circumstances, conducts home visits and interacts regularly with the client. The caseworker is usually able to identify and prevent overpayments from occurring. The intake process screens out potential situations where overpayments could result, such as other possible sources of income, or fraud.

The Early Detection and Prevention Program works closely with intake, and through this process new applicants are linked with the EDP for more extensive screening and/or investigation. If this work is done in the very beginning, this helps to prevent an overpayment.

The Eligibility Review Program - Referrals are made by the income assistance caseworkers for follow-up and review, and it's based on information in administering the caseload. Data matching is another method that is used. The records of common clients are reviewed monthly with EI and CPP through existing service level agreements.

To ensure quality assurance, there are a number of control mechanisms that have been put in place, such training has been implemented to assist field staff in the calculation of overpayments, which can be complicated due to program changes and policies since the transfer of social services to the province. Administrative reviews are held within the field offices to ensure fair and consistent interpretation of policy. Two controls that help detect existing overpayments and prevent new overpayments are administered through the Revenue Recovery Program and are referred to the EDP and the eligibility review.

The EDP focuses on the application stage of the income assistance to confirm accuracy and completeness of the information provided by the applicants. The difference between that and the eligibility review is that it focuses more on the ongoing eligibility and involves the review of selected referrals to confirm the recipients remain eligible for assistance, and that the amount of assistance they receive is appropriate.

In order to ensure clients are aware of what their rights are in the information relating to this process, the appeal process applies to this as it does to any of the Department's policies. The first step in the appeal

process can simply be to request an administrative review, which is to be conducted within 10 days, and that's usually conducted by a separate field supervisor who has not been involved in the case. If the outcome of the review upholds the original decision, the client can then request a formal appeal and is advised of the process by field staff. They have 30 days to file an appeal.

The appeal hearing is held within travelling distance of the client, or by phone if access is a problem. The hearing consists of the appeal chair, a representative from Community Services, the client, and a representative if they wish. A written decision is sent to all parties advising of the outcome.

Eligible income assistance clients - which is $17.1 million - the recovery is obtained through either a lump sum payment, which has been reimbursed either through Canada Pension or the 45 monthly maximum payments. Former clients who are no longer eligible for assistance - that's the $27.3 million figure - those are overpayments for individuals who no longer qualify for assistance and are transferred to Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations for collection. The overpayment is removed from Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations if the client becomes eligible for assistance at a later date.

Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations recovers monies on behalf of provincial departments, Community Services, Finance, Education and Justice. They work with former Community Services clients to assess their financial situation. This assessment ensures that an overpayment arrangement takes into consideration the client's financial capacity to make payments. So if a client is no longer able to make a payment at that time, they will discuss that until they're in a situation to make payment.

Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations will register an overpayment with the Canada Revenue Agency Refund Setoff Program if a client will not make arrangements with Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations for repayment, based on their ability to pay or if the client cannot be located. The Setoff Program allows the CRA to forward a client's income tax refund directly to Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations for application against an overpayment.

The Workers' Compensation Board and the Department of Community Services recently signed a service level agreement earlier this year to allow for data matching, with the intent to prevent overpayments and allow for recovery of existing payments. With the Canada Pension Plan, there is an existing data matching agreement, and currently the Department is conducting process improvements, so that they can explore to improve our effectiveness and timeliness.

The Canada Revenue Agency and the Department are currently in negotiations to expand potential areas for increased data matching. The child benefit adjustment unit, to see what savings can be achieved, has undertaken a project. The Department has tried to focus on prevention. The Department has implemented a new processes so a client knows upfront what their entitlements are, what their expectations are and are given some options.

The eligibility review process is intended to prevent expenditures not save money. The integrated case management is a new system, a new project that's underway, and the intent is that this will allow for improved tools to prevent overpayments, better tracking, better documentation, consistent information instead of what the Department has had up to date. Most importantly, staff training, providing staff with a better understanding of policy applications to prevent overpayment and skills to calculate accurately when they do occur.

MATTERS OF DISCUSSION

The Committee went into details on the following matters:

Collection of Overpayment - collection of social assistance overpayments by a caseworker or staff in Service Nova Scotia Municipal Relations, average caseload for a caseworker, 26% overpayment rate, 4% of the

overpayment cases are due to fraud, $1.5 - $2 million is not recovered immediately and needs to be collected, average overpayment is $1500 per year, no statue of limitations on collecting overpayments, different systems in place calculated rates differently, revenue recovery units early detection section focus on prevention versus collection;

Early Detection Program - detect overpayments as early as possible, clients changes in circumstances, getting money from additional sources, Canada Pension awards for injuries, communication between the caseworker and the client, new ESIA Handbook training programs for staff;

Review of Cases - case review on an annual basis, monthly assessment process, process for errors by the Department uses an easier approach versus an overpayment due to fraud, $500 per year ($45 per month) collection limit for overpayments;

Chain of Command - clients deal with caseworkers, problems go to a supervisor, district manager, regional administrator then to the Department itself;

Writing Off of Debts – recording of overpayments, debts owed to the province, ability to write off a debt owed to the province, attempts at collection, recommendations made to the Minister, statute of limitation concerning collections, hardship tests;

Nova Scotia Power Inc. - problems paying power bills, discontinuation of services, extreme circumstances; and

National Council on Welfare – report on current welfare rates and poor attitude that surrounds the entire system, attitude of the general public concerning people collecting social assistance.

ADDITIONAL MATTERS OF DISCUSSION

The Committee discussed and approved having an extra meeting in October with the Valley Autism Support Team (VAST) and the Autism Association of Nova Scotia. October is Autism Month in Nova Scotia and the Committee felt that it would be appropriate to hear from these groups in a timely manner.

REQUEST FOR DOCUMENTATION

During the meeting, the Committee requested the following additional documentation from the witnesses:

A copy of the survey that has been completed by the Department that tracks and monitors social assistance overpayments;

Copies of the statistics that the Department has concerning the percentage of fraud in the Social Assistance overpayment situation;

A breakdown of the categories of social assistance overpayments;

A copy of an outline of a maximum overpayment situation; and

Copies of the 18 fact sheets that the Department of Community Services has put together for their Social Assistance clients;

TRANSCRIPT

A copy of this meeting transcript is available from the Legislative Committees Office or on-line at the following address:

http://www.gov.ns.ca/legislature/hansard/comm/cs/cs_2004oct14.htm

See also Appendix I

Valley Autism Support Team / Autism Association of Nova Scotia

Thursday, October 28, 2004

WITNESSES

Valley Autism Support Team (VAST)

Mr. Norman J. Donovan
Director - VAST

Ms. Janet Kroetch
Member

Autism Association of Nova Scotia

Ms. Vicki Harvey
Executive Director

Ms. Jo-Lynn Fenton
Vice President Autism Society of Canada (Nova Scotia Representative)

Ms. Michelle Gardner
President – Autism PDD Society of Cape Breton

Also in attendance at this meeting were members of the **Families for Early Autism Treatment**

BACKGROUND

One in 200 children are born with Autism in Nova Scotia. That amounts to approximately 43 children per year that will suffer from this disease. October is Autism month in Nova Scotia and the Committee asked members of the Valley Autism Support Team (VAST) and the Autism Association of Nova Scotia to appear before them as witnesses so that the Committee could become better informed about the situation that these families face daily.

Autism is a mental condition usually present from childhood, characterized by complete self-absorption and a reduced ability to respond and communicate with the outside world.

MATTERS OF DISCUSSION

Early Intervention Treatment Program and Diagnosis - early diagnosis, IWK Health Centres early assessment program for children between the age of birth and 6 years old, waiting lists for assessment;

Private Assessment – cost of private assessment ($2000.00 per assessment);

Schools Transitions - transitions are extremely difficult, moving from elementary school to junior high school (grades 6 to 7) or from junior high school to senior high school (grades 9 to 10), changes in a child's routine;

Respite Care - Respite Care Program cap ($42,000), need for additional funds for this program;

Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA) Model of Treatment - treatment methods, Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA) Model, hours of intensive behavioural intervention per week, modelled to an individual child, specific treatment plans;

Child and Youth Action Committee (CAYAC) - interdepartmental committee, enhancing services in Nova Scotia for children less than six years of age that have special needs, CAYAC report on preschool aged children with autistic spectrum disorders (ASD); and

Education - need for medical profession being educated on the symptoms of autism, diagnosis of behavioural disorder, not autism, teachers recognizes the symptoms and recommends assessment, lack of funding within the school system.

ADDITIONAL MATTERS OF DISCUSSION

The YWCA Housing Program funding was also discussed at this meeting. Currently, the YWCA houses a number of Community Services clients. The Department owes the YWCA money and has not, as of yet, paid these funds to them even though they have done an internal audit that shows that funds are owed. Officials from the YWCA are meeting with the Minister of Community Services and department officials to discuss the situation. The Committee asked the YWCA to report back to the Committee once the meeting has occurred and then the Committee will decide if it should pursue the matter further.

MOTION

The Committee passed the following motions during the meeting:

The Standing Committee on Community Services encourages the Minister of Health to use a portion of the new federal funding for the Department of Health to implement in the upcoming budget the Applied Behaviour Analysis Therapy Model of treatment for Autistic Children in Nova Scotia.

The Standing Committee on Community Services encourages the Ministers of Health, Education and Community Services to encourage the provincial government to appoint a task force to look at the lifelong issues affecting people with autism.

REQUEST FOR DOCUMENTATION

The Committee did not request any additional documentation from the witnesses.

TRANSCRIPT

A copy of this meeting transcript is available from the Legislative Committees Office or on-line at the following address:

http://www.gov.ns.ca/legislature/hansard/comm/cs/cs_2004oct28.htm

See also Appendix II

Department of Health - Home Care and the YWCA Halifax

Thursday, November 25, 2004

WITNESSES

Department of Health

Ms. Cheryl Dolron
Deputy Minister

Mr. Keith Menzies
Executive Director of Home Care

Ms. Kathy Greenwood
Director of Services and Business Support.

YWCA Halifax

Ms. Brenda Sanderson
President YWCA - Halifax

Ms, Sue Wolstenholme
Executive Director Operations - YWCA - Halifax

BACKGROUND

Home Care provides services to Nova Scotia of all ages who need help with care in their homes and communities. This is one of the services offered through the Continuing Care Branch of the Department of Health.

Home care services are meant to add to the help people can receive from others such as family, community and friends. Home care will help people remain as independent as possible in the community.

It is always the first option considered for care in the community. The service includes things such as home support, which entails personal care, respite and light housekeeping; nursing care such as changing dressings, catheters and intravenous drips and monitoring home oxygen.

A person contacts home care is then put on a list to get an assessment. A care coordinator will call the person at home and a time will be arranged for a meeting to complete that assessment. The assessment involves looking at what care services a person is eligible for based on their needs. Home care will supplement the help currently available from family and community. Fees may be applied to some of the services provided by home care. Fees are based on a means level test.

MATTERS OF DISCUSSION

Recruitment of Home Care Workers - complaints concerning the poor pay and working conditions of home care support workers, collective agreements negotiations, different pay levels and hourly rates, standardization of pay rates, (home support agency worker - $12.63 per hour, long-term care workers - $12.93 per hour), negotiating with the union concerning a guaranteed number of hours for home care workers;

Recruitment of Single Parents – DCS policy to encourage single mothers to become health care workers, building a strong knowledgeable base of employees;

Home Oxygen Program – Clients in need are not charged for the oxygen, no support for portable oxygen, study of oxygen program;

Victorian Order of Nurses (VON) - changes and reorganization within VON structure, delivery of programs, providing of medical services to the home care patients;

Costs of the Home Care System - factors in providing as many services as possible, the more services available the more it will cost, number of people that require the service, amount of money paid to those people providing the home care services;

Withdrawal of Home Care Services - options to withdrawal home care services from clients, extreme circumstances such as abuse by the client, audits of cases, abuse assessment, appeals process, provincial standard of care;

Development of Cancellation Policy - 24-hour cancellation notice to the service provider, without notice the client is charged for the visit, rescheduling, time management, scheduling and efficiency;

Minimum Data Set - tools used to determine a client's means, determines the level of service, means testing, assessment of needs; and

Transition from Hospital to Home - transition from a hospital to a home, home care services, assessment for the requirements of home care.

REQUEST FOR DOCUMENTATION

During the meeting, the Committee requested the following documentation:

A copy of the wait list numbers broken down by district, service by service for the Home Care Program;

A copy of the standards that caregivers are required to provide to Home Care patients;

A copy of the estimates of the dollar amount collected by the Department of Health from the Fine system, broken down by service;

A copy of the standard of Home Care used by the agencies that provide Home Care services for the Department of Health;

A copy of the percentages of people leaving the hospitals that require some form of Home Care Service (broken down by service required); and

Please note that during the meeting, Department of Health officials stated that they would answer any follow-up questions that the MLA for Dartmouth North had concerning the minimum data set.

ADDITIONAL MATTERS OF DISCUSSION

YWCA Halifax

An emergency request was received from the YWCA concerning their funding situation. The Committee decided, by consensus, to hear from the YWCA concerning this matter at the end of the current meeting.

The YWCA received $100,000 in emergency funding from Cabinet just prior to their meeting with the Community Services Committee. In a press release, it was stated that the Cabinet was presenting this as one time only funding. It was determined by government auditors that the YWCA is owed over $83,000 from the Department of Community Services for housing women on their behalf. The YWCA and the Department of Community Services are going to sit down over the next couple of months and work on changing the per diem rate that the Department pays the YWCA for the services that they provide. The YWCA expressed appreciation to the Committee for helping to bring their situation into the public eye, which in turn, spurred on the immediate action by the government.

TRANSCRIPT

A copy of this meeting transcript is available at the Legislative Committees Office or on-line at the following address:

http://www.gov.ns.ca/legislature/hansard/comm/cs/cs_2004nov25.htm

Nova Scotia Children's Aid Society

Thursday, January 27, 2005

WITNESSES

Nova Scotia Children's Aid Society

Mr. Jack Coffin
Chair of the Presidents and Executive Directors Group
President Cape Breton-Victoria Chapter Children's Aid Society

Ms. Marie Boone
Executive Director Cape Breton-Victoria Children's Aid Society

Ms. Doreen Beaton
Chair of the Board of Directors Inverness-Richmond Children's Aid Society

Mr. Mark Mander
President - Family and Children's Services Kings County Children's Aid Society

Mr. Robert Myles
Executive Director - Family and Children's Services Kings County Children's Aid Society

BACKGROUND

The Province of Nova Scotia has an act entitled the Children and Family Services Act, which provides the mandate for agencies, such as the 14 Children's Aid Societies in Nova Scotia. These agencies provide 24-hour service and they are mandated to provide emergency services related to children across the province. In Nova Scotia, any person under the age of 16 is considered a child. The Nova Scotia Children's Aid Society works closely with family support agencies, psychologists, substance abuse counsellors and others in helping to bring services to families. The Nova Scotia Children's Aid Society also works closely with the Federation of Foster Families of Nova Scotia in placing children with adoptive parents.

The Nova Scotia Children's Aid Society has a board of president and executive directors that meets three to four times a year. Problems and issues are discussed at these meetings then meet with departmental officials and/or the Minister of Community Services are arranged. This has been the protocol since the mid 1980's. The Organization has a very good working relationship with the ministry. Governance, placement issues, staff long service awards, extension of wardships from the ages of 16 to19 are just a few of the important issues of the day. There is a Steering Committee reporting to the Minister of Community Services on the recent Deloitte & Touche report on governance. The NSCAS is working on this Committee in order to develop a plan to help the children.

MATTERS OF DISCUSSION

Governance Report - Deloitte & Touche audit on governance, creation of uncertainty amongst partners, of a joint Steering Committee established between the outside agencies and the DCS, four project groups that contain two executive directors on each group, financial concern driving the agenda, private agencies address the needs of the children, report dealt with dollars and controls not the best interest of the child, scope of the Governance Report was based on saving money and establishing better financial controls;

Private Agency Autonomy – need for adequate resources, steering committee project groups, government leadership, proactive and preventative measures, cost of child welfare services, recruitment of more foster parents, improvement of training programs;

Caseloads – caseloads continually reviewed, size of caseloads, complexity of the individual cases, appropriate placement of children;

Foster Parents – lack of foster parents, less volunteerism today, two parents working in today's family, training program for foster parents, children with extreme problems both mental and physical;

Restricted Foster Homes - members of the same family take in other family members, assessment requirements of the extended family, restricted foster home – child specific, Children and Family Services Act procedure, rehabilitating the family system, need for additional resources;

Grandparents Rights - process of becoming a foster parent, grandparents can be approved as foster parents, stressful situation is in the family, possible access of the troubled parent to the child;

Counsellor Homes - caring for children with special needs, requirement for specialized training to qualify for care of these children;

Children Between the Ages of 16 to 19 - unique placement problems due to their age, prevention programs, community fundraising to support programs;

Community Crime Prevention - working with the police departments, monitoring and crime prevention, criminal youth justice system, Restorative Justice Program, underlining problems to prevent youth from committing crimes;

NSCAS Wish List – review of entire system, additional funding, support of community groups for women and youth, family centres, erasing of stigmas, sustainable core funding for non-profit organizations; and

Gambling - gambling addictions, financial problems.

REQUEST FOR DOCUMENTATION

The Committee requested that the witnesses forward the following additional documentation:

A copy of the 5-page response from the NSCAS concerning the Deloitte & Touche audit on governance;

A copy of the written protocol in legislation for placement of children within their own extended family; and

A copy of the steering committee regulations that outline their duties and timelines for reporting.

TRANSCRIPT

A copy of this transcript is available from the Legislative Committees Office or on-line at the following address:

http://www.gov.ns.ca/legislature/hansard/comm/cs/cs_2005jan27.htm

Alternative Transportation Services Societies

Thursday, February 24, 2005

WITNESSES

Mr. Claredon Robicheau
Chair - Nova Scotia League for Equal Opportunities
Founder and volunteer manager "le transport de clare"

Ms. Jen Powley
Provincial Coordinator - Nova Scotia League for Equal Opportunities

Also in Attendance:

Ms. Rhia Perkins
Provincial Secretary
Nova Scotia League for Equal Opportunities (NSLEO)

BACKGROUND

Le transport de Clare was founded in 1994 after a series of community meetings on the transportation issue within Clare. At the time, a great deal of discussion was held and the organization decided to join with the Nova Scotia League for Equal Opportunities (NSLEO). Le transport de Clare uses 10% of its resources on transporting passengers in wheelchairs. The other 90% of their passengers are mentally challenged, blind, summer drivers, citizens in need of canes and walkers.

Fundraising takes place in order to cover the expenses of putting a van on the road. Recently, over $30,000 was raised within a 6-month period. The community and corporate sponsorship has always supported Le transport de Clare and the projects that they are involved in. Over the years, Le transport de Clare has received support from the Municipality of Clare in the amount of $4000. One of the misconceptions that Le transport de Clare deals with on a daily basis is that the services are not just offered to the handicapped. Le transport de Clare services are available to anyone in the community who needs it. Le transport de Clare is dealing with having the citizens feel comfortable using the transportation and not to feel stigmatized. The importance of being able to secure transportation is fundamental to citizens, whether disabled or able-bodied.

MATTERS OF DISCUSSION

Community Transportation Assistance Program (CTAP) and the Alternative Transportation Assistance Program (ATAP) – funding by the Province on a per capita basis ($1.41), 1991 - $500,000 budget, caps for each organization, request for a new formula, 50% of Nova Scotia is covered, request for a per capita rate raised from $1.41 to $1.60, possible minimum grant per service of $20,000, expense for a van ($64,000); agencies' reliance on service (work and appointments), volunteer program;

Public Versus Private Transportation - taxi service accessibility, expensive alternative, use for population with a low-income base;

Ridership Fees - modest ridership fees, funding from Legions, Lions clubs and the Knights of Columbus to help aid those who cannot afford the services;

Nova Scotia League for Equal Opportunity (NSLEO) - advocacy group for all people with disabilities, flagship for accessible transportation;

Fuel Costs - 54% increase in fuel costs since service started in 2001, 2004 - $21,000 for one Alternative Transportation Services Society (ATSS);

Insurance - increase in insurance rates, requirements for insurance, non-profit organization, volunteer board of directors;

Dial-A-Ride – availability of program, 8 programs throughout Nova Scotia, no Sunday service;

Volunteers - need to balance both employees and volunteers to have a good strong mix of people involved in the organizations;

Disabled Tourism - American study - $31 billion of disabled tourism dollars available for places that provide access, untapped market, source of income for rural communities;

Federal Grants – 1990–1995 two major incentive programs - Air Canada busing services and taxis with money to become more accessible - 80% costs paid by the federal grant, providing each province with $100,000 for rural areas' transportation systems - four - $25,000 capital grants; and

Full-Serve Service Stations - trend for service stations to become self-serve, paying extra money for full-serve service stations, Utility and Review Board dealing with complaints, work of the Standing Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

ADDITIONAL MATTERS OF DISCUSSION

The Committee discussed and approved the following agenda items:

Family Violence Forum II
It has become very difficult to get all of the Deputy Ministers together for the second forum on family violence. The Committee decided that a date will be set for the forum and those who can appear will and if Deputy Ministers are unable to attend they will be allowed to send designates. The Committee wants to get the forum completed before the end of the budgetary process for this year so that any recommendations coming from the forum will not miss out on budgetary considerations for the various departments.

New topics added to the Committee's agenda are as follows:

Grandparents Rights For Nova Scotia Association;
Department of Health re: Small Option Homes;
Maritime Advocates For Children in Need (MACIN) formerly Kids in Need (KIN);
Youth in Care Newsletter Project; and
Profit and Not-For-Profit Daycare Centres re: the transfer of seats.

MOTION

During this meeting, the Committee passed the following motion to be sent to the Minister of Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations:

> The Standing Committee on Community Services supports the four recommendations put forward by Nova Scotia League for Equal Opportunity in their recent position paper on transportation. The recommendations are as follows:

1. **Operating Costs**

Through CTAP, funding for the operational portion of accessible and affordable transportation providers should:

- Increase program funding to $554,587.00 (see below for breakdown). This reinstates the funding lost to slippage and accounts for a cost-of-operating adjustment. The former brings the current funding to slightly over the 2001 level of $500,000.00; the latter increases the per capita funding rate from $1.41 to $1.60.
- Adjust funding levels annually to reflect the addition of new service areas and cost-of-operating expenses.

2. Capital

Accessible and affordable transportation should not be seen as a charity but as an integral part of the community. Funding should match economic realities. As such, under the Accessible Transportation Acquisition Program (ATAP):

- Increase vehicle acquisition grants to four:
  - two for new vehicles in the amount of $20,000.00
  - two for used vehicles in the amount of $10,000.00

  Grants should be reserved for providers of affordable, public transportation only (i.e. not to long term care facilities or taxis).

3. Small Market Subsidy

Basic service provision costs remain constant regardless of the size of the area served. Allow for this by allocating a minimum of $20,000.00 to service providers regardless of population served. NSLEO recommends that providers serving an area smaller than 30,000 persons receive this base amount.

BUDGET for CTAP (including ATAP)

Operating (CTAP)	$ 446,587.00 (includes East Hants added in 2005)
Capital (ATAP)	$ 60,000.00
Low population	$ 20,000.00
Start up	$ 15,000.00
NS-CBTA, workshop	$ 5,000.00
Research grant	$ 5,000,00
Plates	$ 3,000.00
Total	**$ 554,587.00**

Work with other levels of government:

4. Collaborating

Recognize the importance of affordable, accessible transportation to the life and wellness of a community. Encourage other levels of government to support NSLEO's effort to make changes in other areas that affect the ability of persons with disabilities to participate in community life.

This includes:

- snow removal and sidewalk maintenance
- public transportation (Access-a-bus, Accessible Low Floor buses, ferries, rapid transit, trains and air travel)
- accessible taxis

REQUEST FOR DOCUMENTATION

The Committee did not request additional documentation from the witnesses.

TRANSCRIPT

A copy of this meeting transcript is available at the Legislative Committees Office or on-line at the following address:

http://www.gov.ns.ca/legislature/hansard/comm/cs/cs_2005feb24.htm

See also Appendix III

Forum on Family Violence – Part II

Thursday, February 24, 2005

WITNESSES

Department of Community Services

Ms. Judith Ferguson
Assistant Deputy Minister

Mr. George Savory
Senior Director – Children and Family Services

Department of Justice

Mr. Doug Keefe, QC
Deputy Minister

Ms. Stephanie MacInnis-Langley
Manager - Special Initiatives for Victims

Department of Health

Ms. Cheryl Doiron
Deputy Minister of Health
Chief Executive Officer of the Office of Health Promotion

Mr. Rob Turnbull
Provincial Coordinator - Adult Protection Services
(Also speaking on behalf of the Senior Citizens' Secretariat)

Advisory Council on the Status of Women

Ms. Doreen Paris
Chair of the Advisory Council

Ms. Brigitte Neumann
Executive Director

BACKGROUND

The Standing Committee held a forum on family violence on Thursday, June 24, 2004. In attendance at that forum were representatives from Transition Houses, Women's Centres, Avalon Sexual Centre and Men's Intervention Programs. During the initial forum, the Committee passed a motion to invite the Department of Community Services, the Department of Justice, the Department of Health, the Department of Education, representatives, perhaps, from the IWK, the Halifax Regional Police, the Law Reform Commission and any other associated stakeholder such as the Advisory Council on the Status of Women, to appear at an all-day forum when the Committee reconvened in the Fall of 2004. This forum is being held in order to discuss the issues surrounding the coalition partners and to try to develop a coordinated government approach in the funding of all of these organizations.

PRESENTATIONS

Each of the departments made presentations before the Committee. Detailed excerpts from each of the presentations can be seen at the end of this report in the section entitled Family Violence Forums.

MATTERS OF DISCUSSION

The Committee went into details on the following matters:

Working with Community Based Groups
Community Services is working on a regional redesign process to address the concerns of the groups;

Health - 37 Community Health Boards (CHBs), communities to assess, increasing grants to the CHBs via the District Health Authorities (DHAs), working with the community based groups, identify problems community by community, grants and funding;

Justice - grants to organizations, Nova Scotia Legal Aid, Legal Information Society of Nova Scotia;
Advisory Council - not a granting agency, smaller projects, working with coalition partners;
Health - grants $348,000 per year, prevention programs.

Voyeurism and Conditional Sentences
Justice - dramatic rise in voyeurism, right of freedom of expression versus invasion of privacy, conditional sentencing, pre-sentencing reports, Criminal Code of Canada, use of video cameras and cellphone cameras, Bill before the House of Assembly restricting the use of video cellphones in public places, justice system is an adversarial process, revictimization, Regional Victim Services Program, Criminal Injuries Counselling Program, anger management classes, Respectful Relationships Program;

Advisory Council – held forums entitled Exploitation of Women and Girls Through Technology, Criminal Code of Canada, changes through the Parliament and Senate of Canada, sentencing by the courts.

Budget Reductions / Redesign Process
Community Services - budget - one time only additional $10,000 grant to the 23 organizations, 9.3% increase in funding to the transition houses and men's prevention programs, regional redesign process, the senior staff of the department and the 23 organizations involved in the process.

Collection of Information and Evidence from Victims
Health - policies concerning physicians suspecting abuse, social workers on duty at hospitals emergency rooms, examinations, physical and physiological issues, interviewing the victims.

Domestic Violence
All Witnesses - need for a definition on abuse, high-risk case.
Preliminary numbers: Cape Breton Regional Municipality (CBRM) and Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM) are as follows:

CBRM - 857 cases – 172 were judged as high-risk cases - 20%, 77 cases involved children;
HRM 2629 cases – 26 were judged as high-risk cases - 1%.

Previous Forum Recommendations
Community Services - had not seen the recommendations put forward to them from the initial forum held on June 24, 2004.

Role of the Advisory Council on the Status of Women
Advisory Council - advisory to the government, advocacy and education mandate, Board of Directors from throughout Nova Scotia, wide range of opinion and input from all areas of the province.

Family Violence Prevention Initiative (FVPI)
Justice and Community Services - FVPI formulated a government wide strategy on dealing with family violence, departments had a strategy, FVIP disbanded, breakdown of system, new initiative for a program.

Addiction Services
Health - strategies concerning addictions to alcohol, drugs, tobacco and gambling, proven contributing factors, domestic and family violence.

REQUEST FOR DOCUMENTATION

The Committee requested the following additional documentation from the witnesses:

Department of Community Services

The Committee requested that the Department forward provincial statistics concerning families when they are in transition houses in the province, is there any affordable housing that's set aside by the Department.

The Department of Community Services committed to sending the Committee a timeline concerning the implementation of the recommendations that were sent to them after the initial forum on family violence that was held on June 24, 2004.

Department of Justice

The Deputy Minister was asked to provide statistics on the number of offenders found guilty of domestic abuse that have been made to take anger management programs.

Department of Health

The Deputy Minister mentioned the possibility of having the government departments that are involved in dealing with and funding family violence come together and for a small investment form a secretariat that could coordinate the government's overall strategy. This is a matter that the Deputy will look into and get back to the Committee.

TRANSCRIPT

A copy of the transcript for this forum is available at the Legislative Committees Office or on-line at the following address:

http://www.gov.ns.ca/legislature/hansard/comm/cs/cs_2005feb24.htm

Grandparents Rights For Nova Scotia Association

Thursday, March 31, 2005

WITNESSES

Grandparents Rights For Nova Scotia Association

Mrs. Pauline Glenn
Chair

Mrs. Thelma Gillispie
Secretary Treasurer

Mr. Gordon Stoodley
Acting Vice Chair

Additional Members of the Association in Attendance:

Mr. Howard Glenn
Mr. Brian Gillispie
Mrs. Betty Stoodley

BACKGROUND

The Grandparents Rights For Nova Scotia Association (GRFNSA) asked to appear before the Committee so that they could inform the Committee about the situation that they, as grandparents, can face when families get involved in custody battles. Often a child's access to his/her grandparents can be affected by a custody problem. In some cases, grandparents are petitioning for and gaining custody of their grandchildren from the courts. Often times when situations deteriorate within a family, the Department of Community Services becomes involved and a child can end up being removed from the family unit.

In Nova Scotia, there are 2435 children living with their grandparents. There are 1250 children living with their parents in the grandparents home, and 1185 children living with one grandparent. The GRFNSA works on a provincial level with the Departments of Community Services, Justice and the courts as interested third parties in cases of custody.

MATTERS OF DISCUSSION

Custody - person with custody has control, anger involved in custody cases, grandparents rights are lost, traumatic event for the child, circumstances of each case;

Marriage and Divorce - living together without being married and living apart without being divorced, lack of marriage certificates complicate custody rights;

Legislation for Grandparents Rights – possibility of new legislation in Nova Scotia supporting grandparent's rights, lack of support in the court system, supervised visits, monitored telephone calls, influence of grandparents on a child, restraining orders;

Mediation Services - help resolve a custody situation, outside sources, creation of a dialogue;

The Best Interest of the Child – Nova Scotia Children's Aid Society (NSCAS), placement of a child, becoming a grandparent at an earlier age, grandparents applying for custody of their grandchildren; and

Foster Parents – possibility of law recognizing that grandparents can be foster parents, relationship between NSCAS and the Federation of Foster Families (FFF), assessments, intrusiveness of family court system.

ADDITIONAL MATTERS OF DISCUSSION

The Committee added the following two items to their Spring Agenda:

IWK Health Centre re: mental health services for youth; and
Kidsport Program – Sports Nova Scotia via Office of Health Promotion.

MOTION

The Standing Committee on Community Services passed the following motion:

> The Standing Committee on Community Services ask the Minister of Community Services and the Minister of Justice to review the Legislation of British Columbia, Alberta, Yukon and Quebec, as it pertains to the rights of the grandparents and report back to the Standing Committee as to the possible action in Nova Scotia Legislation and to report back to the Committee within the next six months.

REQUEST FOR DOCUMENTATION

The Committee requested the following additional piece of documentation from the witnesses:

A copy of the Senate Report "For the Sake of the Children".

TRANSCRIPT

A copy of this meeting transcript is available at the Legislative Committees Office or on-line at the following address:

http://www.gov.ns.ca/legislature/hansard/comm/cs/cs_2005mar31.htm

See also Appendix IV

Youth-in-Care Newsletter Project

Thursday, June 2, 2005

WITNESSES

Youth-in-Care Newsletter Project

Mr. Andrew Safer - Project Coordinator
Ms. Ammy Purcell
Ms. Cyndi Rafuse
Mr. Tony Beaumier
Mr. John Walker

BACKGROUND

The Youth-in-Care Newsletter Project was created by the Halifax Children's Aid Society in order to provide Youth-in-Care with an outlet to talk about the child welfare system and the experiences that they have within that system. In April of 2005, the project published its fifth newsletter. The newsletter has many financial sponsors throughout the community that make the success of the project possible.

The newsletter project involves youth who both are and are not in-care. There are a lot of different situations that the youth represent and this creates an interesting dichotomy. There is a tremendous amount of instability in situations and the newsletter is a way in which continuity can be maintained to help them overcome the challenges that they face on a day-to-day basis.

For this newsletter there were 25 2-hour sessions where the youth had group discussions, writing seminars, learned interview skills as well as web-site training. There was even a session on resumes and portfolios.

There is a 60% drop out rate from school for youth-in-care and this project is a way to keep the students involved and interested in learning. Most of the time placement in a group home is dependant on staying in school.

The Project is funded on a year-to-year basis; however, it is a constant struggle to ensure that there are funds available to continue the program. The project has a number of corporate sponsors and they are always putting together proposals for funding to the various community groups.

This is the second appearance of the youth involved with the Newsletter Project before the Standing Committee on Community Services. The first meeting was held on Thursday, November 13, 2003.

MATTERS OF DISCUSSION

Newsletter Project - conception of the project, youth involved, mentors, need for infrastructure, helping to educate the professionals within the system, reading the interviews, first hand feedback concerning the publication, stable reliable reference in a youth's life, getting involved in the community, means of support and continuity;

Project Funding - Canada Nova Scotia Skills and Learning Framework interdepartmental committee, $41,000 per year, corporate sponsors, foundations;

Ages - ages of the youth involved 15-19, long term involvement in the newsletter;

School Support - high drop out rate for youth-in-care, lack of a stable environment changing schools, barriers in place for completing youth's education, home schooling, non-traditional adult programs;

Caseworkers - caseworkers critical to youth in care, support for the youth, once a month meetings with caseworkers, calls are supposed to be returned within 24 hours, caseloads, communications, squeaky wheel syndrome;

Youth Between the Ages of 16-19 Years of Age - gap in the system, not considered to be children, cut off from funding and resources at the age of 16, lack of control over their situation;

Trade Union Program - youth program to further education, Department of Community Services in conjunction with income assistance, bursary programs, involvement of trade unions, various courses in place, community colleges that will guarantee a job once training is complete;

Foster Parents - lack of foster parents in the system, gaps in funding, subsidizing the extras for the children, disincentive in becoming a foster parent, Nova Scotia Federation of Foster Families;

Amherst Newsletter - Youth-in-Care Newsletter Project had been started in Amherst, 10 youth involved, ended due to movement within the community, great distances to travel to participate in a program, needed more community support; and

Evaluation by Youth - need for a system for youth to evaluate the caseworkers, group homes and foster parents, formal mechanism, create positive changes to the system.

MOTION

The Committee unanimously approved the following motion:

The Standing Committee on Community Services would like to encourage the Department of Community Services to continue their financial support of the Youth-in-Care Newsletter Project through the Canada Nova Scotia Skills and Framework Committee.

REQUEST FOR DOCUMENTATION

The Committee requested the following additional documentation from the witnesses:

A copy of any Canadian statistics on the accepted ratio of the number of youth assigned to a social worker.

TRANSCRIPT

A copy of this and the November 13, 2003 transcript from the meeting with the Youth-in-Care Newsletter Project is available from the Legislative Committees Office or on-line at the following addresses:

Thursday, November 13, 2003: http://www.gov.ns.ca/legislature/hansard/comm/cs/cs_2003nov13.htm
Thursday, June 2, 2005: http://www.gov.ns.ca/legislature/hansard/comm/cs/cs_2005jun02.htm

See also Appendix V

Setting the Fall 2005 / Winter 2006 Agenda

Thursday, June 23, 2005

APPROVED WITNESSES

The Committee approved the following witnesses to appear before them in 2005- 2006:

Breakfast for Learning Program
Witnesses - Ms. Debbie Madore - Nutrition for Learning Program Coordinator - Cape Breton - Victoria Regional School Board as well as representatives from the Halifax Regional School Board.

IWK Mental Health Services for Youth (Adolescent Centre for Treatment)
Witnesses - Senior Officials from the IWK Health Care Centre

Department of Community Services concerning Day Care Centres (Profit and Not-for-Profit) concerning the transfer of seats. (Possibility of 2 meetings)
Witnesses - Profit and Not-for-Profit sector, representatives from Department of Community Services

* **2-Day Forum concerning Poverty**
Witnesses: Invited Guests and members of the public

Community Support for Adults
(Direct Support for Persons with Disabilities)
Witnesses – Senior Staff from the Department of Community Services / Parent Group of Clients

Crosbie House Society
Witnesses: Members of the Crosbie House Society

KidSport Program
Witnesses: Officials from Sport Nova Scotia through the Office of Health Promotion. Mr. David Wagg, BRLS - KidSport Coordinator and Mr. Jamie Ferguson - Chief Executive Officer - Sport Nova Scotia

Small Options Homes - The future of small, unlicensed seniors homes
Witnesses: Operators of Community-based seniors' homes, families of residents.

Removed from the Approved Witness List

The following witnesses that have been previously approved to appear before the Committee were removed from the witness list:

Maritime Advocates For Children in Need (MACIN) *formerly Kids In Need (KIN)* **- focus on Nova Scotia Children**
Witnesses: Senior officials from the organization

ADDITIONAL MATTERS

The Committee determined that it would hold a 2-day forum on poverty. The following is an outline of the tentative agenda for the forum:

Details on Forum

* **2-Day Forum concerning Poverty**
Witnesses: Invited Guests and members of the public

The Committee is going to hold a 2-day forum on Poverty.

9:00 – 12:00 a.m.
Meeting with Stakeholder groups
(Face of Poverty, Women's Centre CONNECT!,
Nova Scotia Association of Social Workers
Feed Nova Scotia (new name of food banks provincial organization)
Disability Groups

1:30 – 4:30
Round Table on Issues such as Social Assistance Rates,
Affordable Housing, Low income energy costs, lack of drug plans for the working poor, medical aid, transportation issues, education and training, changes to the Employment Support and Income Support Act

Day Two
9:00 – 12:00 a.m.

Law Amendments style forum with members of the general public as well as advisory groups, health professionals, family centres, business communities (Boards of Trade and Chambers of Commerce), Kinsman, Rotary and Lions' Clubs, Church Groups

1:30 – 4:30
Committee discussion and recommendation session

The Committee is going to request funding from the Speaker as Chairman of the Internal Economy Board for funding an advertisement to ensure that the general public are aware of the open session of the forum. Communications Nova Scotia will be consulted and an ad strategy will be drawn up. The Committee will have all the information in the MLA Constituency Offices as well as sending out press releases on the issue. They will use as many means as possible to spread the news.

TRANSCRIPT

A copy of this meeting transcript is available at the Legislative Committees Office or on-line at the following address:

http://www.gov.ns.ca/legislature/hansard/comm/cs/cs_2005jun23.htm

Forums

on

Family

Violence

Forum on Family Violence (Part I)

Thursday, June 24, 2004

WITNESSES

Avalon Sexual Assault Centre
Ms. Irene Smith
Executive Director

Ms. Serena Ali
Member of the Board of Directors

Men's Prevention Program
Mr. Ron Kelly
Director New Leaf (Pictou)

Ms. Nancy Gray
New Start (Halifax)

Transition House Association of Nova Scotia (THANS)
Ms. Pamela Harrison
Coordinator - THANS

Ms. Lyn Barrett
Executive Director – Bryony House

Ms. Shirley Oickle
Executive Director – Harbour House

Ms. Bea LeBlanc
Executive Director – Cape Breton Transition House Association

Ms. Suzanne White
Executive Director – Citizens Against Spousal Abuse

Ms. Tammy Lee Vautour
Executive Director – Naomi Society

Ms. Starlynn Shears
Executive Director – Third Place

Ms. Rhonda Fraser
Executive Director – Chrysalis House

Ms. Elaine Smith
Executive Director – Juniper House

Ms. Shelagh Rayworth
Executive Director – Autumn House

Ms. Mary Elizabeth Cameron
Staff – Leeside Transition House

Women's Centres CONNECT !

Ms. Peggy Mahon
Coordinator

Ms. Lucille Harper
Antigonish Women's Resources Centre

Ms. Louise Smith-MacDonald
Every Woman's Centre

Ms. Myrene Keating-Owen
Lea Place Women's Centre

Ms. Bernadette MacDonald
Pictou County Women's Centre

Ms. Rhonda Haines-Richards
Second Story Women's Centre

Ms. Della Longmire
The Women's Place

Ms. Dianne Crowell
Tri-County Women's Centre

Ms. Krista Poole
Central Nova Women's Resources Centre

BACKGROUND

The Standing Committee on Community Services, over the past year, has heard from a number of organizations concerning family violence. The Committee determined that it would like to hold a forum in order to have a number of groups present at a round table to discuss the problem of family violence and the difficulties that the individual organizations are having in dealing with the government. In order to facilitate a meaningful round table discussion the following question were provided to each of the witnesses as a starting point for comments:

The Standing Committee on Community Services recognizes that all participants in this family violence forum are deeply committed to the provision of services for family violence prevention and intervention programs. The Committee also recognizes that there are limited resources that can be provided to strengthen and enhance services for women and men in Nova Scotia. As an introduction to the afternoon panel discussion, we request that your organizations respond to the following questions, using a ten-minute timeframe:

3. *How can members of the Standing Committee on Community Services support your organization(s) and ensure that the programs and services you provide can be strengthened and enhanced, without the expenditure of more government funds?*

4. *If there was a small increase in government funds for your organization(s) how can the members of the Standing Committee on Community Services support you and ensure that the programs and services you provide can be strengthened and enhanced?*

PRESENTATIONS

Each of the organizations that were invited to attend the all-day forum were from the non-profit sector. These organizations made presentations before the Committee. Detailed excerpts from each organization's presentation follows:

Women's Centre CONNECT!

While violence against women is not a primary focus of women's centres, it has been, and continues to be, of major concern to women's centres in our role in the provision of a continuum of services to women for the following reasons:

Women may come to a women's centre in crisis related to an abusive relationship and we make a direct referral to a transition house, or for her partner to a men's intervention program;

The issues women are facing when they are leaving an abusive relationship, or who have left an abusive relationship in the past, are access to social assistance, the need to re-enter the workforce, legal issues such as custody and access, the need to find housing, health issues related to the emotions and/or physical abuse they have experienced, and relationships with their children. They come to women's centres either through a direct referral from a transition house, second stage housing, as a partner from a man in a men's intervention program, from various government services such as the Department of Community Services, mental health counsellors, or on their own;

Women who have been sexually assaulted come to a women's centre to seek support related to dealing with the legal system and health issues;

In these circumstances women rely heavily on our core services of individual support counselling, individual advocacy and accompaniment, information and referral, our programs such as self-esteem and transition to employment;

Because of our multi-dimensional approach to the provision of services of crisis intervention, prevention and community development, and the multi-issue of entry points mentioned, women's centres work closely and co-operatively with other agencies and are an essential link in the service network in our communities. We work with the community partners in ensuring effective protocols related to sexual assault and community education, and awareness programs related to violence against women; and

As organizations we seek to address women's equality issues. In this respect we have worked provincially with Avalon Centre; men's intervention programs; transition houses; and, nationally, to improve coordinated responses to violence against women and sexual assault in particular. We are partners in the Purple Ribbon Campaign; organize December 6th events in our communities; and are active members of our community inter-agency committees. It is in this context that we have come today to discuss with the members of the Standing Committee on Community Services, and with organizations that we work closely with in our communities, related to a community response to violence against women.

There are also other ways that you can support us in our work. As we mentioned, women's centres work on women's equality issues; we therefore wish to raise the issue of social programs and their relationship to women's rights to equality under both the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the international treaties that Canada and the provinces have signed onto.

The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms has given a central place to the rights to equality of security of the person. Also, we want to refer to the International Human Rights Treaty, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, or CEDAW.

We therefore respectfully request that the Standing Committee on Community Services support women's centres by recommending to the Province of Nova Scotia that when considering spending priorities, the province must take into account the following: the negative impact on women of recent cuts and changes to social programs and services and both the domestic and the International Human Rights Law that guarantees equality to women in Canada. We also encourage you to advocate that Nova Scotia play a leadership role in ensuring women's equality rights are protected and that adequate resources are allocated to encourage observance by Nova Scotia of women's human rights and ensure women in Nova Scotia enjoy equality in real terms.

We strongly urge you to both recognize and support the work of organizations around this table whose work is focused on addressing the very issues that were identified by the UN committee in their recommendations to Canada. In particular, poverty, violence against women, legal and housing issues - all of which are interrelated as we provide the continuum of services to women in our communities. We ask you to advocate for adequate resources to address women's poverty and violence against women and, finally, as signified by your motion on May 13th when we met with you and reiterated earlier in this presentation, we ask you to advocate for the recognition of women's centres as a vital service by providing stable, adequate funding and sufficient staffing levels to all centres in their community.

Avalon Sexual Assault Centre

My first recommendation to the Standing Committee is to acknowledge the valuable work that the Avalon Sexual Assault Centre does for women in Nova Scotia by passing a motion that the Government of Nova Scotia recognize the vital and essential services that the Avalon Centre provides to women in this province by providing stable, adequate funding to ensure that the Centres' programs and services are sustainable.

I would also ask the Standing Committee to recognize that the Government of Nova Scotia, federally, provincially, territorially has an obligation to actively work together to ensure compliance with the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, all forms of violence, and that the Standing Committee recognize the need to hold the Canadian Government, federally, provincially, territorially accountable to its obligation to take action on the recommendations by the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women. In particular, that they pay attention to combatting violence against women, stepping up efforts to combat violence against women and girls, and increase funding for women's crisis centres and shelters in order to address the needs of women victims of violence under all levels of government. This, of course, would include stepping up funding for the Avalon Sexual Assault Centre, women's centres, transition houses in Nova Scotia.

The Standing Committee can support my organization and sister organizations from across this province by being political advocates and taking action and strongly supporting the establishment of a parliamentary committee on women's issues, ensuring compliance with the CEDAW. I was also going to talk a little bit about CAP and CHST, but Peggy covered that so I won't take any more time to deal with that issue.

Men's Prevention Program

On behalf of the Association of Men's Intervention Programs, I'd like to try to answer these two questions that were put before us. The first question, without the expenditure of more government funds, there are a number of recommendations that I noted this morning in the presentation that I think can be addressed without necessarily any more funds.

They include No. 3, "The Department assist us by facilitating requests for federal funding to support additional programming and research into best practices.", including evaluation. No. 4 is the "Department assist us with the establishment of a communication infrastructure to support a sound information system." No. 5 would be the "Department further assist us to improve our efficiency by allowing us to explore options for free programming space, support staff, research expertise, etc.", and also fundraising. And most importantly, No. 6, we recommend the department work with the association " . . . to develop a framework for looking at the issues of family violence." From those recommendations, I think those could largely be handled without the expenditure of much more funds.

Also, it would be helpful for us if the Committee would help us and support us in terms of us being recognized as essential services. One would be recognition within the budget process; we don't feel we're actually involved in any kind of process when it comes to the budgeting. Basically we get the money just sent to us whenever the budget comes down, there's no process to actually involve ourselves in. We would also like the government to sign on to the standards of practice that I talked about this morning; I handed a copy in to the Chairman after the presentation.

The second point I'd like to make is I think there could be some help coming from this Committee in terms of ensuring that the talks all involved with the Department of Community Services on a regional basis remain meaningful. There's been some difficulty in the history of this whole process when the cuts were announced in the Spring of 2002 that we felt we were under the gun from those cuts. Now we're trying to enter into meaningful discussions. I think we're going to have to spend some time exploring the potentials that we can look at here and we're also going to have to look at issues on a provincial basis, not only regional.

Another point is we'd like the Department of Community Services to involve us at earlier stages, if there are going to be initiatives or training coming down. So, basically, what that point refers to is that as community organizations, we feel we have a lot to offer. It would help us to feel more respected as community-based organizations to be able to be invited into those processes earlier.

The last point, without more funds, would be that we would like to continue these meetings with the Standing Committee. I was getting the sense earlier that this Committee is in the process of trying to meet with more organizations that fall under the Department of Community Services, and we feel it's a very useful thing. I would like to think that it just doesn't end here today, that we can continue this process of maybe yearly meetings.

The second question was if there was a small increase, and I would like to refer to the recommendations that all programs be maintained and supported with full and sustainable funding from the department and that discussions commence immediately regarding the establishment of branch offices for full provincial coverage. How we're going to arrive at adequate funding is largely unknown at this point. It may come out of the process that we're involved with from the Department of Community Services, but I guess time will tell on that. Something else that would be helpful, we feel, would be if there could be some way that we could talk about these issues on an ongoing basis.

It was unfortunate that the Family Violence Prevention Initiative was cut in this province because, in our mind, it did really significant work. It was a way to turn beliefs and thoughts and initiatives into action. I think that you might consider reinstating that or some other model that could help move forward the work that needs to be done in this area.

Transition House Association of Nova Scotia (THANS)

We have not had an increase in our operational funding since, I think, 1995. We have expenses soaring. Every day, every month, something goes up. Sometimes it's the things that were once very small parts of our budget that have become huge chunks of our budget, such as insurance and liability insurance. Logistically,

each of us already has to find, within our often cash-strapped communities, virtually 25 per cent of our bare-bones budget, just to stay afloat. We are in a never-ending struggle to meet increasing demands with decreasing resources.

However, to answer the question, we would still welcome your assistance in terms of supporting changes that, for instance, would improve Nova Scotia's economic climate, because an improved and strengthened economic climate correspondingly makes life easier for non-profits within that economic culture. However, we do have a few specific things. Could you address, for instance, soaring insurance premiums? They are eating our lifeblood, they are not well subsidized by the department. Can there be gas or oil rebates? Obviously this is the wish list. Could you advocate for our staff to get onto government benefit plans, and maybe share training and development opportunities that already exist within the department? Could you give us back the provincial portion of the HST?

Even without increased direct funds, the members of the Standing Committee could also provide us with help through information sharing. Perhaps a joint committee to help identify special funding that might be available, cross-departmental funding opportunities, federal funding that we very seldom access because we don't even know what's out there and would probably need support from the province to get into.

We need your support in other non-monetary ways as well. We're concerned about the focus that's being placed on high-risk cases throughout this province. In the flurry of activities around protocol development and the designation in tracking of high-risk cases, we run the associated risk of suggesting that the bulk of cases that we're working on are not high-risk; however, in our own experience, risk can quickly escalate from low to high in a moment of space, especially if services are not provided to those at risk early enough.

It's that experience that leads me to my next point. We need all of you to recognize us for the expertise that we do bring to this table and to our communities at large on the issue of family violence. Over the past three years, we have the constant feeling that we have to virtually justify our very existence. This is disheartening at best, and mental strain and breakdown issues at worst. We would suggest that it is crucial that family violence not get lost in the shuffle of our multi-issue political environment in this province, that this province and all of its departments, not just Community Services, make a substantive commitment to ending family violence, and preferably with some increase in funding.

MATTERS OF DISCUSSION

The Committee went into detailed discussions on many matters. The following is a list of highlights from those discussions:

Funding
The organizations that attended the forum all receive funds from the Department of Community Services. The Department of Community Services has a budget of $756 million. The monies for 2003-04 that went to transition houses, men's programs and women's centres totalled just over $5 million. That's 0.8 of 1 per cent - four-fifths of 1 per cent of the total budget; in fact, the men's programs it's eight one-hundredths of 1 per cent of the total budget.

One of the coalition partners mentioned that a possible way to help their organizations was in dealing with property taxes. The possibility of the province helping to provide grants in lieu of tax money on the properties that organizations occupy to the communities was raised. Even having access to provincial phone rates or insurance coverage. There may be things which can be coordinated by the various government departments that would have a small impact on the Department but a huge impact on the coalition partners.

Relationship with the Department of Community Services
The Committee and witnesses observed that there seems to be a combative relationship between the

coalition, the Department of Community Services and the government. The coalition partners would like to work collectively and collaboratively with DCS and government as a whole but the coalition is not to be able to do that especially with the Department of Community Services. The coalition suggested that there seems to be a protocol in place that does not foster a good working relationship.

The Department of Community Services seems to be heading toward regionalization of services and the coalition wants to deal with the Department on a provincial basis. Their provincial structure allows them to get past struggling to survive and dividing up the pie and hurting other organizations and allows them to look ahead, as a group, at all the services that are provided throughout the province. The coalition stated that regional meetings are not designed to coalesce us around service provision. The organizations are very concerned that all of the progress that has been made since the budget cuts of April 4, 2002 will be erased.

In May 2003, the coalition partners forwarded a report to the Department of Community Services. In January 2004 the Department responded by sending out a 12-page report that the partners say did not address a single one of their recommendations that were made in May 2003. This is just one of numerous issues that has become a stumbling block in the relationship between the coalition and the Department of Community Services.

Interdepartmental Funding
The Committee brought up the possibility of having multiple departments fund various parts of the budget for the coalition partners. For instance, if a program that one of the organizations is running would be health related, maybe it should be funded in part by the Department of Health. In 1999-2000 the women's centres were engaged in an interdepartmental planning process and there is a report on the books at the Department of Community Services. There were a number of recommendations related to how interdepartmental funding might work and nothing has been done with that report. That report was a joint planning committee. There were a number of government departments on that committee such as the Departments of Justice, Education, Community Services, and Health.

Advisory Council on the Status of Women
The relationship between Nova Scotia's Advisory Council on the Status of Women and the coalition partners is always changing and evolving. The Advisory Council is predominantly at arm's length from government but advises government on women's issues. At times, who sits on the board will determine what types of issues that the Advisory Council will be researching. Sometimes the Advisory Council is working on a grass roots level with community activists and at other times they are not. When the provincial government dissolved the Women's Directorate, the Advisory Council shifted its direction and then became an organization that speaks to government, and not particularly for the women of the Province of Nova Scotia. The Advisory Council is working, if not directly, on behalf of women within the communities of Nova Scotia. At least they are trying to continue with the research facet of their organization and somewhat fulfil their mandate.

Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)
The United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination recently put forward a recommendation to its members that each country establish a parliamentary committee on women's issues, ensuring compliance with CEDAW. The coalition partners support the forming of a permanent parliamentary committee on women's issues. They would like to see this newly formed committee act as a watchdog at the federal level to be dealing with some of these issues of social program transfer monies, and hopefully looking at trying to establish conditions whereby the provinces would be accountable on how those funds are being spent.

MOTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

After having in-depth discussions, the Standing Committee on Community Services is making the following recommendations to the provincial government as a whole, as well as specifically to the Department of Community Services concerning their overall government spending priorities and that the Committee supports the following:

There shall be no closures, mandated amalgamations or cutbacks in services or programs offered by the coalition partners (THANS, Women's Centre CONNECT!, Men's Prevention Program and the Avalon Sexual Assault Centre);

Both service enhancements and improvements are essential;

Full, secure and sustainable funding must be guaranteed;

Community accountability and community leadership must be guaranteed; and

Each provincial organization requires operational funding.

The Standing Committee on Community Services also approved a motion stating their support of the organizations around the table and they recommend to the Government of Nova Scotia that when considering spending priorities, the government must take into account the negative impact on women of recent cuts and changes to social programs and services, which is related to the CHST and the lack of conditions on social transfer, as well as the domestic and International Human Rights Law that guarantees equality to women in Canada.

The Committee also passed a motion to invite the Department of Community Services, the Department of Justice, the Department of Health, the Department of Education, representatives, perhaps, from the IWK, the Halifax Regional Police, the Law Reform Commission and any other associated stakeholder such as the Advisory Council on the Status of Women, to appear at an all-day forum when the Committee reconvenes in the Fall of 2004. This forum will be held in order to discuss this issue and to try to develop a coordinated government approach in the funding of all of these organizations.

When the **Women's Centre CONNECT!** appeared before the Committee in May of 2004, the Standing Committee passed a motion that was sent to the Department of Community Services. The Committee discussed this matter again and wishes to reiterate their support for the following:

Support women's centres core services, in particular, recognition that women's centres core services are distinct, essential, and integral to the community;

Network of services provided for women; recognition for women's centres core services, which include direct services of individual support counselling and crisis intervention, information and referral, individual advocacy and accompaniment programs, outreach, community education, community development initiatives and networks;

Recognize and support the current demand by women for women's centres core services and service improvements, in particular, full support and full funding for women's centres core services that enable the staff complement as defined by each women's centre, in order to effectively deliver women's centres core services; interdepartmental funding for re-entry training programs to be delivered by women's centres;

Support to find creative ways to effectively account for full benefits of the provincial government's investment in women's centres, full support and full funding for Women's Centres CONNECT! ; and

Recognize the strength of women's centres current linkages and co-operation as integral to the delivery of our core services.

The Committee also supports putting forward the following recommendations from the individual organizations as follows:

The **Men's Prevention Program** put forward to the Committee the following six recommendations to the Department of Community Services and reiterated their importance to the Committee. The Committee, in turn passed a motion to again forward the recommendations to the Department of Community Services and ask them to start immediately the consultation process with the Program. The recommendations are as follows:

All existing programs be maintained and supported with full and sustainable funding from the Department (of Community Services);

Discussions commence re: branch offices or additional resources for full provincial coverage;

The Department (of Community Services) assist us (the Men's Prevention Program) by facilitating requests for federal funding to support additional programming and research into best practices;

The Department (of Community Services) assist us (the Men's Prevention Program) with the establishment of a communication infrastructure to support a sound information system;

The Department (of Community Services) further assist us (the Men's Prevention Program) to improve our efficiency by allowing us to explore options for free programming space, support staff, research expertise, etc; and

Most importantly, we (the Men's Prevention Program) recommend that the Department of Community Services work with the Association of Men's Intervention Programs to develop a framework for looking at the issue of family violence.

The Committee determined that they would send all the recommendations and suggestions that have come out of today's forum to the Department of Community Services, asking them to not only take action but to give the Committee, within four months' time, an update on what progress has been made concerning the recommendations.

REQUEST FOR DOCUMENTATION

Within the forum there was discussion surrounding the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, as well as the International Convention to Eliminate Discrimination Against Women, and the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women. The Coalition partners wanted the Standing Committee on Community Services to consider supporting the establishment of a permanent parliamentary committee on women's issues to ensure compliance with CEDAW. The Committee asked the coalition partners to draft a letter that could then be circulated to the Committee. This issue would be looked at and considered at a later date.

TRANSCRIPT

A copy of this meeting transcript is available from the Legislative Committees Office or available on-line at the following address from pages :

http://www.gov.ns.ca/legislature/hansard/comm/cs/cs_2004jun24.htm

Forum on Family Violence – Part II

Thursday, February 24, 2005

WITNESSES

Department of Community Services

Ms. Judith Ferguson
Assistant Deputy Minister

Mr. George Savory
Senior Director – Children and Family Services

Department of Justice

Mr. Doug Keefe, QC
Deputy Minister

Ms. Stephanie MacInnis-Langley
Manager - Special Initiatives for Victims

Department of Health

Ms. Cheryl Doiron
Deputy Minister of Health
Chief Executive Officer of the Office of Health Promotion

Mr. Rob Turnbull
Provincial Coordinator - Adult Protection Services
(Also speaking on behalf of the Senior Citizens' Secretariat)

Advisory Council on the Status of Women

Ms. Doreen Paris
Chair of the Advisor Council

Ms. Brigitte Neumann
Executive Director

BACKGROUND

The Standing Committee held a forum on family violence on Thursday, June 24, 2004. In attendance at that forum were representatives from Transition Houses, Women's Centres, Avalon Sexual Centre and Men's Intervention Programs. During the initial forum the Committee passed a motion to invite the Department of Community Services, the Department of Justice, the Department of Health, the Department of Education, representatives, perhaps, from the IWK, the Halifax Regional Police, the Law Reform Commission and any other associated stakeholder such as the Advisory Council on the Status of Women, to appear at an all-day forum when the Committee reconvened in the Fall of 2004. This forum is being held in order to discuss the issues surrounding the coalition partners and to try to develop a coordinated government approach in the funding of all of these organizations.

PRESENTATIONS

Each of the departments made presentations before the Committee. Detailed excerpts from each presentation follows:

Department of Justice

The duty of the justice system is order that is democratic and just. It underpins absolutely everything that is valued in society. It is a major instrument for social change, but it's a cumbersome and difficult to handle instrument. There are a couple of reasons for that. First of all, it is not like other systems, it is a deliberately non-integrated system. It is, in fact, a system of systems.

Secondly, the funding for the justice system comes from all three layers of government. The police in Nova Scotia, for example, policing is a municipal responsibility under service exchange. So the municipalities in this province spend $121.5 million a year on policing, that's municipal. The federal government spends about $57 million on policing, that's federal policing; it's drug enforcement and things like that. The province spends about $20.5 million on policing. In terms of operating policing in this province we are small players. Of that, probably 30 to 40 per cent is highway patrol.

Contrary to popular belief, the Department of Justice does not even direct the police to conduct an investigation, with one exception, if it's a re-investigation, the Department has a protocol that says it can direct a particular police force, but in general, if the department believes a crime has been committed, they refer what they know to the police and it is the police's decision whether to investigate and whether to charge. The Crown, similarly, has the decision whether to proceed or not with the charges. If the Attorney General believes that they are doing the wrong thing or not doing the right thing, he would have to give them a written direction and it would be published.

The judiciary is independent as a matter of constitutional law in this country and cannot be directed. Finally, the private Bar, the defence Bar, the civil Bar, their duty is to represent their clients, within the strictures of the Code of Conduct and the law. The Department of Justice does not direct them.

In October 1995, the desire, the pressure, to have the justice system give a better response, a more appropriate response to domestic violence, had risen to the point where it was acknowledged within the system that something had to be done. Out of this response came the Framework for Action Against Family Violence and that was and continues to be very important and I think that's the seminal document. There has also been a massive training initiative, the first of its kind, probably the only of its kind with 3,200 justice workers. Everybody except the judges - the judges had their own training - was trained in the framework and the nature of domestic violence and the appropriate response to domestic violence. There is a need for strengthened coordination. There are some key strategic decisions to make.

One is that the response to domestic violence has to be woven into the fabric of the justice system, not an add-on. The Department recognized that by weaving it in, the fact is that the vast bulk of the justice system is not the Department's to weave in. In this field there is Corrections, Victim Services and Court Services. Those are our front-line people in this field. But the police, transition houses, Community Services, Health, many, many other people also have organizations that are actually in the fie much more than the Department of Justice. The goal is to strengthen the Department's capacity and to support partnerships.

The Department of Justice created the Justice Partners Forum, which brings the leadership of the justice system together twice a year to talk about justice system issues. It created an institution, the forum institutionalized the meetings held in October 1995 and 1996, with the explicit purpose of supporting it and sustaining that type of co-operation.

Funding from the government was obtained to create case coordinators. Originally, 3.5 case coordinators and building on Dean Russell's recommendations, were actually, placed in the police departments. The chiefs of police say that these employees are invaluable. It's an invaluable resource because they help the police and the community groups and all the other justice players connect.

The Department of Justice also developed the overarching High Risk Case Coordination Protocol Framework, and that is being rolled out, successfully, in each county or municipality, depending on the size, in this province. It's a pretty important event, groups of people who are involved in this field, and those six or seven key providers have to sit down at the local level and negotiate exactly what it is they do and what they will do to co-operate with each other. The Framework is a tremendous document that is difficult to negotiate because people are really making a commitment to each other to do that.

The Department needs training. What they cannot control they can lead through training. People love training, people are crying out for training on domestic violence. Again, in order to sustain it, the Department created the Justice Learning Centre. The Justice Learning Centre is really a very modest physical asset. It's one classroom and an office, but it's done in partnership with the Nova Scotia Community College. The Centre has 13 campuses throughout Nova Scotia. It has a powerful on-line presence.

The Department created, through the learning centre, a network of trainers (84). The training started in December 2002 and January 2003. A Department of Justice employee developed the material on the Domestic Violence Intervention Act. People were trained in three groups: municipal police, RCMP, military police, EMO, legal aid, PPS and Justice officials in domestic violence in the framework. The Department of Community Services was present, chiefs of police, and various other middle and senior managers from organizations to talk about domestic violence.

Specific to the Justice Department, there is a case coordinator program. People who are familiar with the Youth Criminal Justice Act know that a contractor in Nova Scotia created a flipbook that ended up being adopted by many other provinces in Canada.

The Regional Victim Services Program has half of their cases dealing with domestic violence, There is criminal injuries counselling. Under the Domestic Violence Intervention Act, which Nova Scotia first proposed in 1992, the Department put out a discussion paper. Groups that were combatting domestic violence were against it. The groups stated that it might detract from the efforts to make the criminal justice system work better. Concentrating on the criminal justice system was more work than the Department thought it would be. Also the Department was not ready to run a domestic violence intervention program. The JP Centre was set up and now runs well; they secure about 250 cases of emergency protection orders.

There are Family Courts and staff training and the Department of Justice has opened up one and soon it will open up a second, family law clinic. There are firearms programs, if there is a hit - like a criminal or any form of behaviour - then the person who wants a PAL, which is a permit to have a weapon, will get an interview and an assessment, and then the Department of Justice can flag that for the police. There is also the Corrections Branch running respectful relationships and the Department is helping communities develop high-risk offender protocols.

Justice, PPS and now the Department of Community Services have a deputy ministers' leadership committee consisting of us three. The Departments are trying to find a way to revitalize the somewhat moribund interdepartmental committee that existed.

The Department of Justice is in the process to go back into domestic violence in the justice system and see how all these changes, which are just beginning to roll out, are working. There is an evaluation of the Domestic Violence Intervention Act, about to be started, and soon the Department will go to the street with an RFP to do family violence tracking and revitalize that they are examining domestic violence courts.

Department of Community Services

The Department of Community Services (DCS) has played a key role in family violence services for some time, both from a policy and a funding perspective.

In terms of funding, the province provides funding to nine transition houses, six men's intervention programs and eight women's centres. Women's centres provide services and programs to women on a wide range of issues related to women's equality and family violence is a major concern.

The total funding last year to these 23 organizations was approximately $5.5 million. In addition, last year Avalon Sexual Assault Centre was provided with $270,000 and $25,000; DCS will be adding to their base grant over each of the next four years. Avalon provides a vital service and the department was particularly pleased to be able to provide this additional funding. Protocols, training, information sharing and public education are key in order to have a real impact around this issue. Examining services and addressing changing needs requires links among government departments and community organizations.

Currently, there is a redesign process underway with the transition houses and men's intervention programs. Work to review family violence services at DCS began in the Spring of 2002. The initiative was launched with a proposed budget reduction, which was immediately reversed, with funding being maintained and, in fact, increased since that time. It was clear, after the proposed budget reduction that there needed to be more discussion and research to determine community requirements and the evolving needs of people in family violence situations. The national statistics show that 6 per cent to 7 per cent of women involved in family violence situations access transition houses, but 93 per cent to 94 per cent of women require outreach services, and this is something that the Department is going to examine.

Together with community stakeholders, DCS is going to look at which core services need to be available across the province, where the gaps exist, and how we can anticipate and plan for the future. The goal of DCS is to work together to evaluate services, to make sure the right services are offered and that those services are reaching the people who really and truly need the service. DCS is trying to strengthen and improve their relationships with the people providing services in the community, which had become strained early in the process.

In 2003, the coalition of transition houses, men's intervention programs and women's centres delivered a report to the department with a series of recommendations which launched the development of the joint planning activity that began in early 2004. In response to that report, the DCS began a joint planning process that will allow the DCS to work directly at the local level with the community organizations, fostering stronger links where services are provided.

Prior to the development of this regional process, family violence organizations were the only agencies funded by DCS that did not have a direct link to Community Services staff at our local, regional level. What DCS has learned in certainly in terms of service delivery, is that one solution doesn't fit everything. DCS is going to look at the regional differences and similarities and then have some responses that actually fit the specific regional situations.

Eight senior staff from across the province have been assigned to work with the community organizations to develop a local plan that responds to the needs of victims of abuse and their partners. In addition, and even beyond the redesign, DCS is hoping that they will develop relationships so that if there are problems beyond the redesign, that they will be able to access our regional staff and talk about them, hopefully, with a view with our regional staff being able to help them resolve them.

Together DCS is working on solutions and will involve other community groups and organizations to develop an effective program of services. DCS acknowledges that there may not always be agreements around the table or that the discussions are going to be easy, but DCS is heartened and encouraged that there will be some very good discussions around the regional tables.

DCS needs to ensure that there's a provincial commitment and a vision with the best place to determine actions to address community needs worked on at the regional level.

High Risk Case Coordination Protocol Framework - DCS is planning to have their staff trained by this Spring and they are currently working on setting up the training session in partnership with the Justice Learning Centre. DCS is collaborating with the Department of Justice and preparing a portion of the flipbook. DCS recently collaborated on a poster about the issue of family violence.

DCS is working in partnership with the Justice Learning Centre on a training plan for family violence that will be provided to Community Services' staff, not just child welfare staff who have family violence training as part of their core training that they do in terms of child welfare, but with all of our staff. DCS has staff who are in and out of people's homes. There are 1,000 staff across 40 offices who have a significant amount of client contact and certainly, it is DCS's hope in terms of this training plan, that as many staff as possible across all four program areas will be trained on the issues of family violence.

It's not just the training that's important but it's also enabling DCS staff to know the links within the government system and the community system, so that they can be sure when they are meeting with clients, that they can assist them in terms of navigating through the system and making sure that they are getting the services that they require as efficiently as we can. Training of DCS staff is a huge priority of the deputy minister. DCS is getting additional resources in terms of having trainers. DCS hopes to develop some core training for other programs beyond child welfare and that it's certainly anticipated that family violence will be involved in that training.

DCS has a tremendous amount of respect for the work of the organizations, the people who work in the area of family violence and the volunteers who work on the boards. DCS now has an opportunity to work together on these regional committees and there should be a number of interesting recommendations that the Department will be able to consider as a result of this process.

Department of Health

From the Department of Health and the Office of Health Promotion's point of view, family violence is a serious threat to the health of Nova Scotians. The department believes that everyone has the right to live free from violence and from the fear of violence. The dollars that are allocated by Health are not a true measure of the actual investment and commitment to family violence protection because there are initiatives in place across many areas of the Department of Health that have a direct or indirect impact on responding to this issue and similarly through the work of the Office of Health Promotion. They may not be funded in the name of family violence prevention, but they do go a long way toward making a difference.

Health professionals are often in the best position to identify and provide intervention to stop the cycle of violence. It is the Department of Health's job to equip health professionals with the necessary training and skills, to be able to be effective in dealing with an incident when it happens in a way that is culturally sensitive and that respects privacy, ethical practice and relevant legislation. There are various examples of where this is already happening in the system. There are a huge number of health care workers who are out in the system, who are really third parties to the Department of Health; they fund them. But they carry out their work under their board of directors in their local areas.

The Department is well aware of the extent of focus, education and dialogue that goes on in the district health authorities, in hospitals, regions, or whatever we may have today. Certainly the amount of time, which organizations dedicate to ensuring that professionals are aware and stay up to date with pertinent legislation and regulations, is one form of education.

Organizations also tend to provide periodic dedicated instruction and dialogue to protocols and communication approaches in working with individuals and their families who find themselves in a situation of family and/or sexual violence. Usually these individuals enter the system through the emergency departments. The Department also collaborates regularly with other organizations that are involved in this work, for example, Community Services and law enforcement.

While it is most important that professionals understand aspects of legislation, collection of evidence and approaches to support individuals, it is also important to ensure that any staff that come in contact with patients are aware of how to deal with subjects of this matter, which individuals may confide in them.

Organizations have people who actually are in contact, in conversations, and interface with patients or clients. For example, if you are in a hospital, maybe the housekeeper in your room, some individuals will confide in, so they need to understand when they're out in that field then what to do with that information in order to serve the best interests of the patient or client. So there's a lot of work that goes on among third parties, to ensure that their staff are positioned to be able to deal with things effectively.

First is an initiative that started up in the Department of Health a couple of years ago called the Challenging Behaviour Program. This program was initiated through the Continuing Care Branch that provides home care, long-term care services and those kinds of things. The issue here was to increase the capacity and assist professionals and caregivers in managing challenging behaviours. There are many individuals, often older individuals, who actually get into different forms of confusion - Alzheimer's, other dementia, and often that is accompanied by behaviours which are very challenging and sometimes threatening to either family members, to caregivers, or to other people in institutions. The Department thought that it was time that something be done to help people more effectively manage behaviours that may be physically aggressive, may be inappropriate sexual behaviour, may be states of agitation, or may be vocally disruptive behaviour that happens to a number of individuals in the Department's care, and in the Department's care in different places.

The Department does not want to simply say if somebody's behaviour becomes challenging that they would simply take them away and lock them in some kind of a unit, that is the total answer. What the department has found is that it is better to recognize and assess that challenging behaviour and to follow through with referrals where it's appropriate to maybe other kinds of specialists; it may be a mental health professional, a family physician, it may be simply teaching the skills of how to cope with that behaviour to family members, to a caregiver, and to people in the facilities where these individuals may be housed. So this program actually provides that kind of assistance to families, to long-term care facilities, to home support agencies, to nursing agencies and to continuing care staff.

In 2004, the Department very aggressively started training programs with targets where they would kind of engage people throughout the province in an educational process. The Department will be completing this in the year 2005, at least in terms of saying that they have taken the first round of this kind of training through the province.

The next step that the Department would like to take with that Challenging Behaviour Program is to create a challenging behaviour resource team so that there will be go-to people and that there would be an adequate supply of them throughout the province, that they will be recognized for their expertise, be available for that continuing education and support that needs to go to the various parties.

The Department has created a stabilizing unit where people can go, if all else fails, but not to stay there forever. The goal is to be able to provide an assessment and care plan for the person to be able to return home or return to a facility. The current budget for that program is $741,000. The Department will add to the budget when they take the next step forward.

One of the more visible programs offered through the Department of Health -previous to 2000 was offered through the Department of Community Services - is Adult Protection. That resides within the Continuing Care Branch in the department and it provides services for people who are over the age of 16 who are being abused or neglected, or living in a stage of self-neglect. It may be for people who have a physical disability or mental infirmity, or for those who are not able to care for or fend for themselves, or who are living at a high level of risk to themselves.

This program takes in about 1,200 cases per year around the province. Adult Protection staff, where it's possible, will assist caregivers with dealing with these individuals at providing care plans for them, people, for example, in home care, respite programs. Adult Protection staff also receive and provide training in family violence and they will conduct about 35 to 40 public awareness sessions per year to the general public and sometimes to professional groups. The Adult Protection provincial budget is $1.93 million there are 17 Adult Protection workers in the province.

Currently, the Department is in the process of revising the Adult Protection Act, which was passed in 1985, but it is now under review and we will be recommending a number of changes to be forthcoming through that Act once we get it to the consultation stage, which should be reasonably soon.

Another program is with the Capital Health District known as the SANE Program, referring to sexual assault nurse examination practitioners. The Avalon Sexual Assault Centre administers this program very successfully. This program provides professional nursing service to victims of sexual assault. The nurses in this program receive specialized training in the collection of forensic evidence and the provision of expert testimony in cases before the courts. This is operated on a grant that comes through the Capital Health budget from the Department of Health and currently has a budget of $244,000. This program might be extended to other areas now that it is up and running and it has been in place long enough to be evaluated. Some of that would be based on the volume of cases and the appropriateness of putting the program in a number of other areas so that it will be as close to home as possible for women who are in need of this.

Another area that requires development is child abuse, and particularly the area of children's sexual abuse, a highly specialized area. That has to be done very carefully with the kind of appropriate people involved and that generally involves physicians, particularly pediatricians, and those who take a high level of interest in it because, where it has been implemented, usually it requires some significant additional level of training. So there are several parties that would be involved in that, including physicians, nurses, psychologists and others.

The Protection of Persons in Care Act was passed in the Fall of 2004 in the last sitting of the House. The Government now has a committee consisting of the Department of Community Services and Department of Health preparing definitions and regulations for this new piece of legislation. There is a requirement of reporting in licensed Department of Health facilities and also in the Department of Community Services facilities, and as well, in hospitals. So to operationalize this new Act once all this work is accomplished, there will also need to be additional training in family violence and abuse in facilities that we will have to be carrying out as part of that implementation plan.

Prevention of child abuse needs to be concentrated on. The Department has started to focus their attention on that, both in the Department of Health and in the Office of Health Promotion.

One example that is hard to equate to dollars is the kind of focus that is being taken through the Office of Health Promotion, not just with the Department of Health but with many departments and others, and that is really the whole initiative that we now see really coming to life much more actively, in terms of healthy lifestyles, and starting that with children and youth. There are implications where people do not have healthy starts for leading to coping skills, which can be very difficult and negative, and often result in inappropriate kinds of behaviours.

So if the Department focuses on very early in life making sure that everything is moving in appropriate directions and during the last couple of years with dollars that came through the federal government, the Department was able to start the Healthy Children's Project through Public Health. That has basically been introduced over the last couple of years and also has a relationship to this particular subject.

The Office of Health Promotion, and specifically Public Health, deals with all issues surrounding the Healthy Sexuality Booklet. While there may be a few people in this province that have not been comfortable with it, by far the vast majority of the municipalities, the education system and the school boards have been comfortable with this. This is being introduced to all youth between the ages of 12 and 17. Through this, it provides very good material that will, hopefully, allow young people to make healthier choices as they are moving into relationships and understanding their rights, how to deal with it, where to go for help and so on.

Basically work needs to be done in preparing people to understand their behaviours, to choose better coping mechanisms where they need to deal with stress and have outlets, is the growth that we are now seeing in supporting youth health centres.

Youth health centres provide a vital role in health promotion and in providing youth with services in a way that they feel safe and comfortable. One of the youth health centres in Guysborough has been opened now for five years or more, and another centre that was just beginning, opened for about 15 months, in the Pictou area. To hear those young people talk about what they are doing, what they believe they need to address and what they're accomplishing very much includes the concept of behaviours by young people in the school, where they act things out in a violent manner. If they are able to work with their colleagues, their peer group and their age group, with the support of some professionals, they can do tremendous things working to turn around some of those behaviours.

The statistics that the Department sees is of people and young people coming through those health centres, where it seems to be a safe place to go, lots of different kinds of opportunities to get services or, in some cases, a place to hang out, means that people can go through that door and not be judged for what they're there for. They do make use of it. It's amazing, the kind of statistics they have.

In the new centre, they have about 1,700 students and last year they had visits in excess of 4,000. The Department is not certain exactly what those numbers mean in terms of the total number of youth that were coming through but, obviously, many of them were coming through that porthole.

The Department has worked in the past couple of years through the CAYAC group, to look at the concept of youth health centres. There have been standards developed for youth health centres that are now seeing many parties - not just the Department of Health but also, certainly, the Department of Education, Justice and others - that certainly can provide support to this. The Department has seen community health boards coming up looking for this kind of service and it's a very, sort of, homegrown, roots at the local level kind of experience.

Seemingly, most of the health centres end up in the schools, which seems to be a very successful place to run them but not all of them are on that basis. A lot of good work is taking place there but also another area where the Department needs to look at the potential for more resources is in helping to grow them.

The Department also works closely with the **Senior Citizens' Secretariat**. They have been working on an elder abuse strategy and have a subcommittee that is looking at the training and education of the public, and with particular emphasis, from their point of view, in helping seniors to understand the issues of seniors' abuse, and how to deal with and how to cope with that.

The Nova Scotia Task Force on Aging, which the Senior Citizens' Secretariat recently ran a number of consultations around - 34 public meetings that were held - that work is now coming together and there are 11 stakeholder focus groups with eight to 15 people in each of those groups who are reviewing all the comments that came in through that process, some of which very much apply to this particular topic. The intention there is to get a final report together by September 2005 and to make recommendations to Cabinet for the following business year.

The Department of Health owns part of the mandate, as well, to enact and support legislation that protects Nova Scotians from violence no matter where or who they are. The Department sees this as being directly related to Acts such as the Mental Health Act, which they are currently in dialogue around - Protection for Persons in Care Act and the Adult Protection Act.

More work needs to be done and the Department is looking forward, together with colleagues in Community Services, Justice and the Status of Women, along with other partners, to identifying further opportunities to create awareness, to educate, to support and to prevent family violence.

Managing and preventing family violence needs to be looked at and women through all of our programs and services need to be looked at across all of our programs. So while the Department would like to have direct dollars and direct programs that address this, they stated that it is absolutely necessary to integrate this kind of awareness and ability to respond through all aspects of the programming that we provide through Health and the Office of Health Promotion.

Health sector staff must be aware of the indicators of abuse, mandatory reporting legislation and how to provide treatment appropriately, or to make referrals to appropriate services. This could range from professional services such as social work assistance, psychology, or to recommendations to them to seek out the advice and, perhaps, protection of police, to advising them and recommending that they seek out transition housing and so on.

The Department believes that family violence is everybody's responsibility. The Department of Health is reviewing their focus on this issue and they are look forward to working with other departments to move this issue forward.

Senior Citizens' Secretariat (SCS)

There is an Elder Abuse Strategy Committee that the Department of Health has a couple of members on the committee. It has been looking at areas that might be able to reach out to assist seniors with abuse issues and strategies. Two subcommittees have been formed out of that very recently and one is to look at financial abuse, which is a key area of abuse in the province.

There are stories where wills have been changed and monies have gone missing and those sorts of things. It has been a difficult area to come to grips with and this committee will have police on it, a Crown Prosecutor as well as some people will be looking at how to deal with financial abuse.

The second committee is actually a committee on how does the SCS create a public awareness of abuse issues among seniors in the province. One of those would be the financial or material abuse. SCS officials are quite optimistic that really good things will come out of that that will lead the way to actually getting more out into the public as far as education, training and awareness of what abuse is, in particular, here, it's abuse among seniors with the secretariat and I think there are two initiatives there that are certainly worthy of note.

Advisory Council on the Status of Women
The Council has worked for 28 years to advance the equality, fairness and dignity for all women in Nova Scotia. Violence against women is directly related to the inequality of women. By building women's equality in all areas, we reduce violence against women.

The mandate of the Advisory Council on the Status of Women is to advise government and to bring forward the concerns of all women in Nova Scotia. The Council does this through four strategic goals and three kinds of work. The Council's goals are: full inclusion of women in all their diversity, economic equality, elimination of violence against women and women's health and well being.

The first goal runs through all of the Council's work. It is a critical element for the Council and it guides everything they do. It is: Council works to increase the participation of women in all their diversity in decisions that affect their lives, families and communities, with particular emphasis on those who face discrimination because of race, age, language, class, ethnicity, religion, disability, sexual orientation or various forms of family status.

Secondly, achievement of economic equality is still elusive; 60 per cent of women work in retail and service sectors where they may face precarious employment with limited benefits.

Personal safety and freedom from violence is an ongoing concern. Women's own reports of spousal or intimate partner violence dropped between 1993 and 1999. That left about 22,000 women in Nova Scotia who faced physical or sexual violence in the previous five years. It doesn't include women who face verbal or emotional abuse, or who face other forms of violence. Demand for service in Nova Scotia remains very high.

The improvement of the health of women is the fourth priority for the Advisory Council. The connection between health and violence is clear. By working to improve women's equality in these four strategic areas, the Council works with many partners to reduce violence against women.

The Council executes their mandate through three main streams of activity: policy and research, community liaison and rural outreach, and information and communication activities.

One example of the work that the Council does is participating in interagency committees, which are collaboration tools that exist within various communities. The Metro Interagency Committee on Family Violence is currently co-chaired by Denise Moore, who is the Council's Coordinator of Regional Services. The purpose of the interagency committees, which also exist in other parts of the province - and I note particularly Cape Breton - is to provide opportunities for collaboration among all the people who are involved in the struggle against family violence, particularly. Family violence, the part of it which is of the greatest concern to the Council, is woman abuse.

Family violence also includes elder abuse, which one might say because most elders are women, for longevity reasons, is of concern to us and also includes children, where it's notable that particularly in cases of sexual abuse, there is an enormous over-representation of little girls. It is important to keep in mind the gender dynamics that run throughout the various kinds of violence and the ways in which, being a girl or a woman, places you at additional disadvantage.

Issues of inclusion and sources of other forms of discrimination are important to us and we do pay attention to the many issues, the many exacerbating issues that are faced, for example, by women in Aboriginal communities, by women of African descent. The Council is very concerned about women with disabilities who are extremely vulnerable to all kinds of abuse regardless of age and stage of life. Those are the kinds of

things that are of great concern to the Advisory Council and something that they want to keep bringing to the forefront, because in making their efforts to deal in an across-the-board way there are too many chances that people will be left out and forgotten. That's where violence and victimization thrive, when the public looks away.

The Council usually participates in many groups like inter-agencies and brings a their experience and contacts with other members in government and communities to those. The Council often does not lead them, but in the case of the Metro Interagency they do at this time.

The Metro Interagency just hosted a special half-day event in recognition of Family Violence Prevention Week here in Halifax. The Senior Citizens' Secretariat is leading in the implementation of the elder abuse prevention strategy and the Council will be participating in that development as well through an education and awareness-working group that will focus on issues such as financial abuse, neglect and many other issues that go along with elder abuse.

The Council remains concerned because women are concerned about certain aspects of the Criminal Code. About 18 months ago the Council submitted a brief on voyeurism to the Justice Canada and they were distressed to find over the previous year and a half that reports were received of what can only be call a new forms of violence against women. For example, using electronic surveillance and subsequently placing the material on the Internet, there have been a number of instances in Nova Scotia and certainly in other provinces as well.

When it did happen in Nova Scotia - in this case a guest in someone's home had placed a camera in the bathroom and created videotapes of the women in the house using the bathroom facilities - what was quite distressing was that there was in fact nothing specifically illegal about that. The Crown Prosecutors who were consulted, the police who were consulted, had a hard time charging the person. In the end they were deported, they were visiting from another country. But it pointed to the fact that there is a good deal of this going on and it's hard to know just what – the Council knows there is something wrong, but it's hard to say this is the crime.

Interestingly enough, many people believe that everyone has a certain rights to privacy, that there are protections in law and to some degree there are but it all gets very confusing when talking about various forms of electronic surveillance or having images of ourselves made public that you would not like to see made public.

There was a similar situation like that in one part of the province where a defendant in a family violence case, for example, as is his right, got copies of the evidence that was going to be brought to court, among that evidence were photographs of the ex-wife's injuries, which he posted for anyone's view on the Internet. Again, it wasn't a specifically illegal activity. But it puzzles the Council and they want to bring forward those concerns and make suggestions on how and when they should be addressed, by the laws of our land. There are emerging issues in violence, those are among them.

Another matter that the Council was very concerned about was trying to get a better balance between the rights of victims and the rights of the people who are accused. For anyone working in the justice system this is one of the hard things that they have to confront from time to time. Certainly, the Charter guarantees everyone right to a full and fair defence in the case of a criminal act. There is a need for protection of victims of crime as well. The Council is particularly concerned at the alleged perpetrator of a sexual assault who was a self-represented litigant at the time being allowed to cross-examine the woman. In the end, he was convicted; therefore, he as the perpetrator, was able to cross-examine her in a very injurious manner over a very long period of time.

In that instance, it was not only the cross-examination itself but that through various forms of delay, the victim in the case had to appear in court 14 times over the course of a very long period. There are problems where the Council does not know whether it is the administration of justice or the law itself or the balance between victim and alleged offender there are very difficult issues for everyone to struggle with. The Council struggles with them and tries to come forward with recommendations that will make sense.

A second area where the Council strongly supports reform of the law has been in conditional sentencing. The Council had their first workshop on that about two months after the legislation was passed. The Council was concerned then as they are now that conditional sentencing, house arrest, is not an appropriate response to woman abuse. It is not okay to send offenders home in cases of wife assault. It's not okay to send people convicted of sexual assault to serve their sentences in their home when their victim lives two doors down the street and doesn't feel safe. The province has made certain representations on the issue of conditional sentencing and the Council is, in general terms, supportive of those.

The Council has a number of publications that we've done: one of the important ones, that the Council looks forward to having the next edition out within the year, is called Family Violence and Personal Safety. The Council first published it in 1979, The publication provides statistics on the prevalence of women abuse in Nova Scotia based on the general social survey of Statistics Canada. That data is readily available elsewhere, they are in the public domain. The Council adds value by bringing them together in one place in a format that's readily accessible to anyone in the community.

The Council is working on and continues to struggle with the subject of getting good, statistical information on sexual assaults. Many sexual assaults are never reported to the police at all, it's a real tip of the iceberg phenomenon. The Council is hesitant about essentially being misleading by doing police reports, charges cleared, convictions/cases come to court, convictions, there is a huge fall off in that side of things. The Council expect, however, within the year to come up with something that makes sense and fairly presents the situation.

On the information and education side, the Council's major effort is through the ongoing publication of Making Changes: A Book for Women in Abusive Relationships. This publication is sent out on request and there are requests for about 15,000 copies each year, which amounts to a direct expenditure of about $18,000.

The Council also keeps in mind violence against women as an issue in other publications that we do. The Council responds to a number of telephone calls from women who were in serious difficulty because of the dissolution of a common law relationship in which they found themselves. The Council is partners with the Senior Citizens' Secretariat and the Legal Information Society of Nova Scotia. Research has shown that living in a common law relationship is associated with higher risks of family violence than being in a marital relationship and therefore included referral information about abuse in the booklet.

One other popular item that the Council publishes is even more pertinent than when it was first published and that is just a simple informational brochure on date rape drugs. With that, you're not really talking about a family violence issue but more violence against women issue that is highly relevant. This has been produced in larger quantities and is now being placed in universities. The Council hopes that there will be opportunities through the industry to get that kind of publication out more widely in communities across the province.

The Council takes the lead on the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women on December 6th. This year, the Council worked with the Transition House Association to bring together a panel to talk about what has been accomplished and what remains to be accomplished in Nova Scotia on violence against women.

The women's movement worldwide has brought family violence out of the shadows. The Council supports the reduction of violence against women directly and indirectly through many activities. It has played a leadership role many times and creates opportunities for organizations and individuals to work together to reduce violence as we approach International Women's Day, which will be March 8th. The Council celebrates the progress they have made but recognize that much remains to be done. Shame and silence about women abuse still affects many women. Dedicated service providers in all sectors need our ongoing support.

MATTERS OF DISCUSSION

The Committee went into details on the following matters:

Working with Community Based Groups

Community Services is working on a regional redesign process to address the concerns of the groups.

Health has 37 Community Health Boards (CHB) that work closely within their own communities to assess the needs of the individual communities. The Department of Health has increased the grants to the CHBs through the District Health Authorities (DHAs). The Department of Health mentioned during this meeting that they will put forward the idea to the CHBs to focus on working with the community based groups so that the Office of Health Promotion (OHP) and Department of Health can get local up to date information. This way problems can be identified community by community but also throughout the province. CHBs in the past have granted funds to community groups and this is a practice that will continue on into the future.

Justice provides a few grants to organizations but they might not be as direct as other departments such as Nova Scotia Legal Aid, which receives $12.2 million. The Legal Information Society of Nova Scotia receives a grant of approximately $ 70,000 a year from Justice as well. Both of these organizations can be accessed as a resource for organizations dealing in family and domestic violence.

The Advisory Council is not a granting agency but there are smaller projects that they work on together with the coalition partners.

The Department of Health grants approximately $348,000 per year to community-based groups for prevention programs. The Department is working to increase this funding in the upcoming year.

Voyeurism and Conditional Sentences

The Department of Justice is seeing a dramatic rise in the incidents of voyeurism. Voyeurism is difficult to protect against because everyone has the right of freedom of expression and it is very difficult to draw the line between what is and what is not an invasion of privacy. Both this and conditional sentencing are Criminal Code matters. With the use of video cameras and cellphone cameras, there is a higher chance now of being spied upon without a person knowing about the violation. Currently, there is a Bill before the House of Assembly restricting the use of video cellphones in public places. The Advisory Council has held a couple of forums on the issue entitled Exploitation of Women and Girls Through Technology.

A number of provinces have lobbied the federal government concerning changes in the Criminal Code. Currently, there are changes that have been put forward to the Parliament of Canada and amendments are before a Senate committee. However, the federal government 's position remains firmly in the belief that the courts are handling sentencing and that is where the discretion should remain. Nova Scotia disagrees with the federal government's position on this matter.

The Department of Justice recognizes that the justice system itself is an adversarial process and that by participating in the system a person can be revictimized. A number of programs have been put in place in

order to provide support to victims of domestic or family violence such as the Regional Victim Services Program or the Criminal Injuries Counselling Program in order to help the victims through the process as painlessly as possible.

Conditional sentencing has been the law since September 2001. Nova Scotia has placed this item on all of the inter-provincial meeting agendas to try to ensure that justice and human rights are protected. The federal government feels that the courts are dealing with this issue on a satisfactory level.

The Department of Justice provides pre-sentencing reports concerning those people that they feel need to be involved in programs such as anger management classes. The Department funds the Respectful Relationships Program with about $80,000 per year.

Budget Reductions / Redesign Process
The Department of Community Services (DCS) in this budget year (2003-2004) was able to provide a one time only additional $10,000 grant to the 23 organizations. In 2003-2004, there was a 9.3% increase in funding to the transition houses and men's prevention programs. DCS has stated that the organizations will not have their budgets reduced but they are awaiting the results of the regional redesign process before they go forward with any new initiatives. Within the redesign process DCS assured the Committee that there has been a lot of communication between the senior staff of the department and the 23 organizations involved in the process.

Collection of Information and Evidence from Victims
The Department of Health has a number of policies in place when a physician suspects abuse. There are social workers on duty at hospitals and on call to emergency departments for when suspected victims are examined. There are physical and physiological issues to be dealt with as well as a need to interview the victims concerning the incident. The Department of Health tries to be as sensitive as possible to the needs of the victim.

Domestic Violence
There are soft numbers for statistics. The Department needs to work on the definition on abuse as well as what would be considered a high-risk case. Preliminary numbers for the Cape Breton Regional Municipality (CBRM) and Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM) are as follows:

CBRM - 857 cases – 172 were judged as high-risk cases - 20%, 77 cases involved children;
HRM 2629 cases – 26 were judged as high-risk cases - 1%

Previous Forum Recommendations
Officials from the Department of Community Services stated that they had not seen the recommendations put forward to them from the initial forum held on June 24, 2004.

Role of the Advisory Council on the Status of Women
The Advisory Council sees its role as not just an advisory to the government but it says that it has an advocacy and education mandate as well. With representatives on the Board of Directors from throughout Nova Scotia there is a wide range of opinion and input from all areas of the province.

Family Violence Prevention Initiative
The Family Violence Prevention Initiative was established in order to formulate a government wide strategy on dealing with family violence. Once the strategy was formed and each department had a clear idea as to what they were going to do in the future the initiative was disbanded. There was a plan put in place for the government departments to work together on the strategy but somehow that initiative seems to have broken down and it is now at a point where something needs to be done.

Addiction Services
The government has strategies in place to deal with addictions to alcohol, drugs, tobacco and gambling. These have been proven to be contributing factors in cases of domestic and family violence. Progress is being made in making these services available to any Nova Scotian that requires them.

REQUEST FOR DOCUMENTATION

The Committee requested the following additional documentation from the witnesses:

Department of Community Services

The Committee requested that the Department forward provincial statistics concerning families when they are in transition houses in the province and whether there is any affordable housing that's set aside by the Department.

The Department of Community Services committed to sending the Committee a timeline concerning the implementation of the recommendations that were sent to them after the initial forum on family violence that was held on June 24, 2004.

Department of Justice

The Deputy Minister was asked to provide statistics concerning the number of offenders found guilty of domestic abuse that have been made to take anger management programs.

Department of Health

The Deputy Minister mentioned the possibility of having the government departments that are involved in dealing with and funding family violence come together and for a small investment form a secretariat that could coordinate the government's overall strategy. This is a matter that the Deputy will look into and get back to the Committee.

TRANSCRIPT

A copy of the transcript for this forum is available at the Legislative Committees Office or on-line at the following address:

http://www.gov.ns.ca/legislature/hansard/comm/cs/cs_2005fby24.htm

STATEMENT

OF

SUBMISSION

Legislative Committees Office
House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

3rd Floor, Dennis Building
1740 Granville Street
PO Box 2630, Station M
Halifax, Nova Scotia
B3J 3N5

STATEMENT OF SUBMISSION

All of which is respectfully submitted to the
House of Assembly this 26th day of January, 2006

Marilyn More, MLA
Chairman

I concur

Mark Parent, MLA
(Vice Chairman)

I concur

Gary Hines, MLA

I concur

Judy Streatch, MLA

I concur

Jerry Pye, MLA

I concur

Gordie Gosse, MLA

I concur

Stephen McNeil, MLA

I concur

Leo Glavine, MLA

I concur

Diana Whalen, MLA

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APPENDICIES

APPENDIX I

Department of Community Services
Cost Recovery of Social Assistance Overpayments

Mora Stevens - CS- Requests for Documentation

From: Mora Stevens
To: Dillon, Harold; Rathbun, Janet; Tyson, Marian F; Williams, Tracey L
Date: 10/14/2004 2:43 PM
Subject: CS- Requests for Documentation
CC: Collier, Joan; Fraser, Vicki; Ryan, Dave

Hello All,

I just wanted to thank you for your appearance before the Standing Committee on Community Services this morning. During the meeting the Committee requested the following documentation:

A copy of the survey that has been completed by the Department that tracks and monitors social assistance overpayments;

Copies of the statistics that the Department has concerning the percentage of fraud in the Social Assistance overpayment situation;

A breakdown of the categories of social assistance overpayments;

A copy of an outline of a maximum overpayment situation; and

Copies of the 18 fact sheets that the Department of Community Services has put together for their Social Assistance clients;

Please forward the information to my office as soon as it is available.

If you have any questions concerning the requested documentation, please do not hesitate in contacting me at anytime.

Thank you.

Mora

Mora Stevens
Community Services Committee Clerk
stevenmg@gov.ns.ca
(9020 424-4494- Phone
9902) 424-0513 - Fax

NOVA SCOTIA
Community Services
Office of the Deputy Minister

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Halifax, Nova Scotia
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DEC - 2 2004

Ms. Marilyn More
Chair, Standing Committee on Community Services
c/o Ms. Mora Stevens
Community Services Committee Clerk
Legislative Committees Office
3rd Floor, Dennis Building
1740 Granville Street
Halifax, Nova Scotia B3J 1X5

Dear Ms. More:

I am responding to the request by the Standing Committee for additional information resulting from the October 14th, 2004 discussion on Social Assistance overpayments.

An information package has been compiled which includes the following documentation:

- Fraud investigation referral statistics (10 year period);
- The breakdown of the categories of Social Assistance overpayments (This is the same information referred to in the request for tracking and monitoring overpayments);
- A sample of an overpayment situation; and
- An index of the 18 fact sheets and individual copies which are available to Social Assistance clients along with the client handbook. Suggested changes by the Standing Committee have been included in the *"Overpayments and Eligibility Reviews"* fact sheet. The revised fact sheet has been forwarded to the Queen's Printer for future orders.

Thank you again for the opportunity to meet with the members of the Standing Committee to discuss the overpayment policies and procedures which are part of the Employment Support and Income Assistance Program. We continue in our efforts to improve client service delivery while maintaining accountability for public funds.

Yours very truly,

Marian F. Tyson, Q.C.
Deputy Minister

Department of Community Services
Revenue Recovery Unit
Fraud Investigation Referral Statistics
Year ending March 31st

Year	Central Region		Northern Region		Eastern Region		Western Region		Total	
	#	Amount	#	Amount	#	Amount	#	Amount	#	Amount
2005*	0	$0	10	$212,581	0	$0	0	$0	10	$212,581
2004	1	$11,744	7	$149,674	3	$144,776	2	$48,483	13	$354,677
2003	0	$0	13	$216,376	5	$95,540	2	$25,999	20	$337,914
2002	0	$0	17	$314,274	3	$241,110	5	$92,249	25	$647,634
2001	8	$432,896	19	$386,810	6	$158,054	2	$29,926	35	$1,007,687
2000	13	$421,629	8	$118,852	8	$525,971	1	$24,018	30	$1,090,470
1999	7	$44,556	4	$71,011	8	$366,104	11	$213,496	30	$695,167
1998	2	$37,236	11	$163,211	6	$370,048	6	$133,052	25	$703,547
1997	3	$53,293	2	$33,626	2	$18,912	3	$81,456	10	$187,287
1996	7	$94,154	6	$168,865	1	$9,282	7	$134,616	21	$406,917
1995	9	$214,296	2	$22,981	0	$0	1	$6,128	12	$243,405
Average per year over 10 years	5	$131,000	10	$164,600	4	$193,000	4	$78,900	23	$567,500
Average per case		$26,200		$16,500		$48,300		$19,700		$24,700

* April 1 to October 29, 2004

Notes:

1. The numbers above are a summary of the cases that were referred to the police to investigate for possible fraud. Only a court proceeding can make the final determination of whether there was fraud.

2. Fraud investigation referrals constitute approximately one quarter of 1 percent of the Income Assistance expenditures over the past 10 years (i.e. $600K divided by $250M)

3. Policy outlines specific criteria that must be met before a case can be referred for fraud investigation.

Breakdown of the Categories of Social Assistance Overpayments

Overpayment Category	Dollar Amount (2004-05)
1. Cohabitation	442,200
2. Maintenance	214,900
3. Earned Income	204,400
4. Child Benefit Adjustment	195,700
5. Income Tax	195,700
6. Change in Shelter Number	194,600
7. Wages	167,900
8. Unearned Income	117,600
9. Canada Pension Plan	71,500
10. Workers' Compensation Board Benefits	64,600
11. Student Loan	57,500
12. Change in # in Budget	51,600
13. Employment Insurance	24,400
14. Old Age Supplement with Guaranteed Income Supplement	17,100
15. Boarder Income	15,700
16. Pharmacare	12,700
17. Private/Company Pension	8,600
18. Old Age Security	2,500
19. Estate Settlement	1,900
20. Training Income	1,400
21. Vocational Training Allowance	400
22. Private Insurance	0
23. Other (Intended for reasons other than above)	1,556,600

Sample Overpayment Situation:

An individual applies to receive Canada Pension Plan (CPP) benefits. There is a delay between the date of their application for CPP benefits and the date they start to receive benefits. They may receive a retroactive lump sum payment for this time period but, until they receive the benefits, they do not have any income. As a result, Income Assistance is provided to the individual until they receive their benefits. The assistance provided will result in an overpayment at the moment the individual is deemed eligible for CPP benefits since the individual is not eligible for assistance for the month they are eligible to receive CPP benefits. Repayment of the overpayment can be satisfied when CPP provides a portion of the retroactive lump sum CPP benefits direct to the Department. Any remaining overpayment balance not recovered by the redirected CPP benefits will be recovered over time from the applicant, through a repayment schedule that is based on their financial capacity.

ESIA INFORMATION FACT SHEETS

1. Benefits for Children
2. Direct Deposit
3. EAPD or Employability Assistance for People with Disabilities Pgrm.
4. Educate to Work
5. Employability Related Expenses
6. Employment Support Services
7. Getting Assistance under Special Circumstances
8. Going to School
9. How much can you get on basic Income Assistance
10. Income Assistance
11. Looking for a Job
12. Medical Assistance
13. Overpayments and Eligibility Reviews
14. Pharmacare
15. Phone Numbers and Web Sites You May Need
16. School Supplies for Families with Children
17. Special Needs
18. What Happens When You Get a Job

Nova Scotia

Department of Community Services
Office of the Minister

PO Box 696
Halifax, Nova Scotia
B3J 2T7

Our File Number:

Ms. Marilyn More, Chair
Standing Committee on Community Services
Legislative Committees Office
3rd Floor, Dennis Building
1740 Granville Street
Halifax, Nova Scotia . B3J 1X5

JAN 14 2005

Dear Ms. More: Marilyn

Thank you for your questions which were tabled on October 18, 2004, regarding the Nova Scotia Child Benefit and the Employment Support and Income Assistance Program (ESIA).

The well-being of children is an important consideration when program changes and policies are developed within the Department of Community Services. As part of the effort to address child poverty, the children's portion for personal allowance was removed from the ESIA program and incorporated as a combined benefit through the Nova Scotia Child Benefit and the National Child Benefit Supplement.

The following information is in response to your questions:

1. *Why did this government allow personal use allowances for children to be eliminated from families on ESIA?*

   In 2001, by removing children's benefits from the Employment Support and Income Assistance program, the clawback of the National Child Benefit Supplement was eliminated. The National Child Benefit Supplement is now indexed to the annual cost of living and all families, including those in receipt of financial assistance from the Department of Community Services, benefit from the annual increases.

   The intent was to increase the amount of allowances for children to low-income families through the combined National Child Benefit, which was not considered as income. The shelter portion of the allowance remained within the ESIA budget.

2. *Given the many studies demonstrating clearly that this practice is creating increased poverty and hunger among families, what action will the Minister take to address this imbalance?*

   Eligibility for the Employment Support and Income Assistance Program is based on income, whereas the standard children's benefit goes to all low-income families regardless of their source of income. This includes approximately 15,000 families receiving social assistance and 20,000 low-income working families with a total of 60,000 children.

.../2

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Nova Scotia continues joint efforts with the federal, provincial and territorial governments to reduce the incidence of child poverty through supports to families. The information provided by the three recently released studies will be reviewed by the Department and considered in the ongoing review of programs and policies which impact on the well-being of children and low-income families in Nova Scotia.

3. *Manitoba cancelled its clawback without touching children's benefits - why couldn't Nova Scotia do the same?*

The National Child Benefit changes occurred in July 2001. At that time and since then different approaches were taken by other provinces and territories (e.g., Manitoba) based on their existing program structure. Nova Scotia, for example now provides enhanced supports to families, such as assistance with child care and transportation expenses.

In addition, the ESIA program provides for those families who temporarily do not receive the combination of the Nova Scotia Child Benefit/National Child Benefit by providing an amount of $133 per month for children under the age of 18 until the family receives the federal funds.

Although children's benefits are provided to families outside the ESIA program, families receiving income assistance continue to be eligible to receive special needs and Pharmacare coverage for their children.

The Department of Community Services provides support to low-income Nova Scotians. The ESIA legislation, introduced in August 2001, was a major step in improving the overall Income Assistance program. Like other jurisdictions who have made program changes best suited to meeting their own jurisdiction's needs, Nova Scotia developed a program that would best support Nova Scotia children and their families.

Again, thank you for your questions on this matter.

Sincerely,

David

David M. Morse

c: Mr. Roderick K. MacArthur, Q.C.

APPENDIX II

Valley Autism Support Team

Legislative Committees Office
House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

3rd Floor, Dennis Building
1740 Granville Street
PO Box 2630, Station M
Halifax, Nova Scotia
B3J 3N5

Hon. Angus MacIsaac
Office of the Minister
Department of Health
4th Floor, Joseph Howe Bldg.
1690 Hollis Street
Halifax

Wednesday, November 3, 2004

Dear Mr. Minister:

Recently the Standing Committee on Community Services held a meeting with the Valley Autism Support Team and the Autism Society of Nova Scotia. A motion was unanimously passed at this meeting which reads as follows:

The Standing Committee on Community Services encourages the Minister of Health to use a portion of the new federal funding for the Department of Health to implement in the upcoming budget the Applied Behaviour Analysis Therapy Model of treatment for Autistic Children in Nova Scotia

It is the hope of the Committee that this matter will be given serious consideration during the upcoming budgeting process. Thank you for your attention in this matter.

Sincerely,

COPY

Ms. Marilyn More, MLA
Chairman - Standing Committee on Community Services

Mr. Mark Parent, MLA - Vice Chairman

Mr. Gordie Gosse, MLA

Mr. Bill Langille, MLA

Mr. Russell MacKinnon, MLA

Mr. Gary Hines, MLA

Mr. Stephen McNeil, MLA

Mr. Jerry Pye, MLA

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Our File Number:

December 8, 2004

Ms. Marilyn More, MLA
Chairman - Standing Committee on Community Services
Legislative Committees Office
House of Assembly Nova Scotia
3rd Floor, Dennis Building
1740 Granville Street
PO Box 2630, Station M
Halifax, NS B3J 3N5

Dear Ms. More:

Thank you for your letter dated November 3, 2004, regarding the Standing Committee on Community Services meeting with the Valley Autism Support Team and the Autism Society of Nova Scotia. Your committee unanimously passed a motion encouraging the use of a portion of the new federal health funding to implement in the upcoming budget for treatment of children with autism.

I made a commitment in the spring of 2004 to the families of children with autism that once additional federal health dollars were made available, funding an early intensive behavioural intervention treatment for children with autism would be a priority. On December 2, 2004, I had the pleasure of honouring that commitment by announcing a new $4 million provincial early intensive behavioural intervention treatment for children with autism.

Thank you for the important work of your committee, and for supporting the need for a treatment program for young children with autism.

Yours truly,

Angus MacIsaac

c: Mr. Allan Horsburgh, Acting Exec. Dir. Financial Services, NS Dept. Health
Mr. Mark Parent, MLA - Vice Chairman
Mr. Bill Langille, MLA
Mr. Gary Hines, MLA
Mr. Jerry Pye, MLA
Mr. Gordie Gosse, MLA
Mr. Russell MacKinnon, MLA
Mr. Stephen McNeil, MLA
Mr. Leo Glavine, MLA

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Legislative Committees Office
House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

3rd Floor, Dennis Building
1740 Granville Street
PO Box 2630, Station M
Halifax, Nova Scotia
B3J 3N5

Hon. Angus MacIsaac
Office of the Minister
Department of Health
4th Floor, Joseph Howe Bldg.
1690 Hollis Street
Halifax

Wednesday, November 3, 2004

Dear Mr. Minister:

Recently the Standing Committee on Community Services held a meeting with the Valley Autism Support Team and the Autism Society of Nova Scotia. A motion was passed at this meeting which reads as follows:

The Standing Committee on Community Services encourages the Ministers of Health, Education and Community Services to encourage the Provincial Government to appoint a task force to look at the lifelong issues affecting people with autism

It is the hope of the Committee that this matter will be given serious consideration. Thank you for your attention in this matter.

Sincerely,

Marilyn

COPY

Ms. Marilyn More, MLA
Chairman - Standing Committee on Community Services

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Department of
Health
Office of the Minister

PO Box 488
Halifax, Nova Scotia
Canada B3J 2R8

Bus: 902 424-3377
Fax: 902 424-0559

Our File Number:

November 25, 2004

Ms. Marilyn More, MLA
Chairman - Standing Committee on Community Services
Legislative Committees Office
House of Assembly Nova Scotia
3rd Floor, Dennis Building
1740 Granville Street
PO Box 2630, Station M
Halifax, NS B3J 3N5

Dear Ms. More:

Thank you for your letter which was received on November 4, 2004, regarding your recent meeting with the Valley Autism Support Team and the Autism Society of Nova Scotia. Thank you also for providing the resolution from the Standing Committee on Community Services.

Autism is a lifelong condition and does present significant challenges to not only the children who have the diagnosis but to their families as well. In recognition of these challenges, the government did provide $2M grant funding in 2000 to develop a project for Early Identification and Intervention Services (EIIS). The Child and Youth Action Committee developed, implemented and evaluated this project.

In 2003/04, this $2M became permanent funding and was put in the base budgets of the Departments of Health, Education and Community Services. The Department of Health has distributed their portion of the $2M to the IWK Health Centre, the District Health Authorities, and NS Hearing and Speech to enhance services to children with autism. While families have appreciated this extra support from the EIIS Project, they have continued to ask the Department of Health for more treatment programs.

In March 2004, the Mental Health Standards were revised and a specialty service called Neurodevelopmental Delay was approved. These standards include a model of treatment called Early Intensive Behavioural Intervention (EIBI) for children with autism. I have met with some families of children with autism on several occasions over the year. These

.../2

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families were given my commitment to seek funding for an EIBI treatment program when additional funds become available. I submitted a recommendation to government on November 18, 2004, to fund the implementation of an EIBI treatment program.

The Mental Health Standards Committee recognizes that many conditions are ongoing and will require services that can transition from childhood to youth and into adulthood. Therefore, they have been developing mental health standards across the life span. At this time, we do not anticipate the development of a task force to look at the lifelong issues affecting people with autism.

All Departments will continue to work collaboratively. In particular, the Departments of Community Services and Health, under the leadership of the two Deputy Ministers, have regular joint meetings of senior program staff which has resulted in several planning initiatives for the good of our clients.

Thank you again for your letter, for the ongoing work of your committee and for raising very valid issues.

Yours truly,

Angus MacIsaac

c: Hon. Jamie Muir, Minister of Education
Hon. David Morse, Minister of Community Services
Ms. Ann Power, Director, Student Services, NS Dept. Education
Ms. Judy Jackson, Director, Community Outreach Services, NS Dept. Community Services

Legislative
Committees Office
House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

3rd Floor, Dennis Building
1740 Granville Street
PO Box 2630, Station M
Halifax, Nova Scotia
B3J 3N5

Hon. David Morse
Office of the Minister
Department of Community Services
8th Floor, Nelson Place
5675 Spring Garden Road
Halifax

Wednesday, November 3, 2004

Dear ~~Mr. Minister~~ David:

Recently the Standing Committee on Community Services held a meeting with the Valley Autism Support Team and the Autism Society of Nova Scotia. A motion was passed at this meeting which reads as follows:

The Standing Committee on Community Services encourages the Ministers of Health, Education and Community Services to encourage the Provincial Government to appoint a task force to look at the lifelong issues affecting people with autism

It is the hope of the Committee that this matter will be given serious consideration. Thank you for your attention in this matter.

Sincerely,

COPY

Marilyn

Ms. Marilyn More, MLA
Chairman - Standing Committee on Community Services

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Department of Community Services
Office of the Minister

PO Box 696
Halifax, Nova Scotia
B3J 2T7

Our File Number:

DEC 08 2004

Ms. Marilyn More, MLA
Chairman-Standing Committee on Community Services
P.O. Box 2630, Station M
Halifax, Nova Scotia
B3J 3N5

Dear Ms. More: Marilyn

Thank you for your letter of November 3, 2004, with respect to the motion passed at the meeting of the Standing Committee on Community Services recently held with the Valley Autism Support Team and the Autism Society of Nova Scotia.

I would like to respond by offering the following comments. The diagnosis and treatment of autism are very significant issues for families dealing with autism. Over the last few years, efforts to address these needs have included the following:

- In 2000, the Children & Youth Action Committee (CAYAC), of which this Department is a member, developed and implemented a model of service called the Early Identification & Intervention Services (EIIS) initiative for children with autism. It included involvement from the Departments of Education, Community Services and Health with a new investment of $2 million. Since that time, an evaluation was completed which indicated that the model significantly enhanced existing services for children.

- In relation to adult services, the Department of Community Services launched the Community Supports for Adults (CSA) Renewal to make recommendations and plans for the future. The CSA Renewal Discussion Paper was released in the Spring of 2004, which sought input from stakeholders on a wide variety of adult service issues, including adults who are autistic. Representatives from the Department of Health have been closely linked to this work.

.../2

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At this time, a Task Force on issues affecting people with autism is not anticipated. Government departments continue to work collaboratively. There are many initiatives occurring within and across departments, a few of which are noted above, which support services for this population.

Again, I want to thank you for your letter and your work. The issues that come forward to your Committee are indeed significant.

Sincerely,

David

David M. Morse

Legislative
Committees Office
House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

3rd Floor, Dennis Building
1740 Granville Street
PO Box 2630, Station M
Halifax, Nova Scotia
B3J 3N5

Hon. Jamie Muir
Office of the Minister
Department of Education
4th Floor, Trade Mart Bldg.
Scotia Square
Halifax

Wednesday, November 3, 2004

Dear ~~Mr. Minister~~ Jamie:

Recently the Standing Committee on Community Services held a meeting with the Valley Autism Support Team and the Autism Society of Nova Scotia. A motion was passed at this meeting which reads as follows:

The Standing Committee on Community Services encourages the Ministers of Health, Education and Community Services to encourage the Provincial Government to appoint a task force to look at the lifelong issues affecting people with autism

It is the hope of the Committee that this matter will be given serious consideration. Thank you for your attention in this matter.

Sincerely,

COPY

Marilyn

Ms. Marilyn More, MLA
Chairman - Standing Committee on Community Services

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APPENDIX III

Alternative Transportation Services Societies

Legislative Committees Office
House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

3rd Floor, Dennis Building
1740 Granville Street
PO Box 2630, Station M
Halifax, Nova Scotia
B3J 3N5

Hon. Barry Barnet
Office of the Minister
Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations
14th Floor – North, Maritime Centre
1505 Barrington Street
Halifax

Thursday, March 31 2005

COPY

Dear Mr. Minister:

Recently the Standing Committee on Community Services held a meeting on Alternative Transportation Services. A motion was unanimously passed at this meeting, which reads as follows:

The Standing Committee on Community Services supports the four recommendations put forward by Nova Scotia League for Equal Opportunity in their recent position paper on transportation:

1. Operating Costs

Through CTAP, funding for the operational portion of accessible and affordable transportation providers should:

Increase program funding to $554,587.00 (see below for break down). This reinstates the funding lost to slippage and accounts for a cost-of-operating adjustment. The former brings the current funding to slightly over the 2001 level of $500,000.00, the latter increases the per capita funding rate from $1.41 to $1.60. Adjust funding levels annually to reflect the addition of new service areas and cost-of-operating expenses.

2. Capital

Accessible and affordable transportation should not be seen as a charity but as an integral part of the community. Funding should match economic realities. As such, under the Accessible Transportation Acquisition Program (ATAP):

Increase vehicle acquisition grants to four:

two for new vehicles in the amount of $20,000.00
two for used vehicles in the amount of $10,000.00

Grants should be reserved for providers of affordable, public transportation only (i.e. not to long term care facilities or taxis).

Small market subsidy

Basic service provision costs remain constant regardless of the size of the area served. Allow for this by allocating a minimum of $20,000.00 to service providers regardless of population served. NSLEO recommends that providers serving an area smaller than 30,000 persons receive this base amount.

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Legislative Committees Office
House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

3rd Floor, Dennis Building
1740 Granville Street
PO Box 2630, Station M
Halifax, Nova Scotia
B3J 3N5

BUDGET for CTAP (including ATAP)

Operating (CTAP)	$446,587.00 (includes East Hants added in 2005)
Capital (ATAP)	$60,000.00
Low population	$20,000.00
Start up	$15,000.00
NS-CBTA, workshop	$5,000.00
Research grant	$5,000,00
Plates	$3,000.00
Total	**$ 554,587.00**

Work with other levels of government:

4. Collaborating
Recognize the importance of affordable, accessible transportation to the life and wellness of a community. Encourage other levels of government to support NSLEO's effort to make changes in other areas that affect the ability of persons with disabilities to participate in community life.
This includes:
snow removal and sidewalk maintenance
public transportation (Access-a-bus, Accessible Low Floor buses, ferries, rapid transit, trains and air travel)
accessible taxis

It is the hope of the Committee that this matter will be given serious consideration during the upcoming budgeting process. Thank you for your attention in this matter.

Sincerely,

Marilyn More

Ms. Marilyn More, MLA
Chairman - Standing Committee on Community Services

Mark Parent

Mr. Mark Parent, MLA - Vice Chairman

Gordie Gosse Jr.

Mr. Gordie Gosse, MLA

Bill Langille

Mr. Bill Langille, MLA

Russell MacKinnon

Mr. Russell MacKinnon, MLA

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Legislative Committees Office
House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

3rd Floor, Dennis Building
1740 Granville Street
PO Box 2630, Station M
Halifax, Nova Scotia
B3J 3N5

Mr. Gary Hines, MLA

Mr. Stephen McNeil, MLA

Mr. Jerry Pye, MLA

Mr. Leo Glavine, MLA

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Service Nova Scotia
and Municipal Relations
Office of the Minister

PO Box 216
Halifax, Nova Scotia
Canada B3J 2M4

Bus: 902 424-5550
Fax: 902 424-0581

Our File Number:

APR 25 2005

Members
Standing Committee on Community Services
Legislative Committees Office
3rd. Floor, Dennis Bldg.
1740 Granville Street
PO Box 2630, Station M
Halifax, Nova Scotia
B3J 3N5

Dear Chair and Members:

Thank you for your recent letter in support of the recommendations by Nova Scotia League for Equal Opportunities (NSLEO) in their position paper on inclusive transportation.

As you are aware the Department of Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations administer the Community Transportation Assistance Program (CTAP) and the Accessible Transportation Assistance Program (ATAP). Since 2001 these programs provided over $1.6 million in funding to support community based inclusive transportation organizations with operating and capital costs. Service areas and level of operations started modestly at that time and have been growing steadily ever since.

Staff, along with the interdepartmental committee on Inclusive Transportation, reviewed the NSLEO position paper carefully and have provided their recommendations to me as well. I can assure you that the recommendations have been given full consideration by SNSMR during budget preparations.

I want to thank you for your interest in inclusive transportation issues and assure you that the department will continue to work with NSLEO and the community based transportation organizations in the province.

Yours truly,

Barry Barnet

cc Ms. Marilyn More, Chair
Mr. Mark Parent, Vice-Chair
Mr. Gordie Gosse, Member
Mr. Bill Langille, Member
Mr. Russell MacKinnon, Member
Mr. Gary Hines, Member
Mr. Stephen MacNeil, Member
Mr. Jerry Pye, Member
Mr. Leo Glavine, Member

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APPENDIX IV

Grandparents Rights for Nova Scotia Association

Legislative Committees Office
House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

3rd Floor, Dennis Building
1740 Granville Street
PO Box 2630, Station M
Halifax, Nova Scotia
B3J 3N5

Hon. David Morse
Office of the Minister
Department of Community Services
8th Floor, Nelson Place
5675 Spring Garden Road
Halifax

COPY

Wednesday, April 13, 2005

Dear Mr. ~~Minister~~ David:

Recently the Standing Committee on Community Services held a meeting with the Grandparents Rights For Nova Scotia Association. A motion was passed at this meeting which reads as follows:

The Standing Committee on Community Services ask the Minister of Community Services and the Minister of Justice to review the Legislation of British Columbia, Alberta, Yukon and Quebec, as it pertains to the rights of the grandparents and report back to the Standing Committee as to the possible action in Nova Scotia Legislation and to report back to the Committee within the next six months.

I thank you and your departments staff in advance for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Marilyn

Ms. Marilyn More, MLA
Chairman - Standing Committee on Community Services

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Legislative Committees Office
House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

3rd Floor, Dennis Building
1740 Granville Street
PO Box 2630, Station M
Halifax, Nova Scotia
B3J 3N5

Hon Michael Baker, QC
Office of the Minister
Department of Justice
4th Floor, Terminal Bldg.
5151 Terminal Road
Halifax

Wednesday, April 13, 2005

COPY

Dear ~~Mr Minister~~ Michael:

Recently the Standing Committee on Community Services held a meeting with the Grandparents Rights For Nova Scotia Association. A motion was passed at this meeting which reads as follows:

The Standing Committee on Community Services ask the Minister of Community Services and the Minister of Justice to review the Legislation of British Columbia, Alberta, Yukon and Quebec, as it pertains to the rights of the grandparents and report back to the Standing Committee as to the possible action in Nova Scotia Legislation and to report back to the Committee within the next six months.

I thank you and your departments staff in advance for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Marilyn

Ms. Marilyn More, MLA
Chairman - Standing Committee on Community Services

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Nova Scotia

Department of Community Services
Office of the Minister

PO Box 696
Halifax, Nova Scotia
B3J 2T7

Our File Number:

Ms. Marilyn More, MLA
Chairman - Standing Committee on
Community Services
Legislative Committees Office
3rd Floor, Dennis Building
1740 Granville Street
Halifax, N.S.

APR 29 2005

Dear Ms. More: Marilyn

Thank you for your letter of April 13, 2005. I note that the March 31st motion passed by your Committee tasks two Ministers with reporting on a legislative review concerning grandparents' rights by October 1, 2005.

Please be assured that I will make the appropriate arrangements with my Honourable colleague, Minister Baker, to provide your Committee with the report.

Sincerely,

David

David M. Morse

c: Honourable Michael G. Baker, Q.C.

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NOVA SCOTIA
Justice
Office of the Minister

PO Box 7, Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada B3J 2L6 • Telephone 902 424-4044 Fax 902 424-0510 • www.gov.ns.ca

October 3, 2005

Marilyn More, MLA
Chair - Standing Committee on Community Service
Legislative Committees Office
P.O. Box 2630, Station M
Halifax, Nova Scotia B3J 3N5

Dear Ms. More:

Re: Grandparents' Rights

This is in response to your letter of April 13, 2005 requesting that the Departments of Justice and Community Services undertake research respecting grandparents' rights in British Columbia, Alberta, Yukon and Quebec.

The issue of grandparents' rights is one which the Government of Nova Scotia continues to monitor and a summary of the updated research with respect to the jurisdictions you identified, in addition to Nova Scotia, Canada and the other Canadian Provinces, is attached.

The Departments of Justice and Community Services are currently in discussions with the Law Reform Commission of Nova Scotia as to whether the Commission would be willing to take on this issue as a project, including further research and stakeholder and public consultation, and provide a report to Government with recommendations.

We trust this information is of assistance to the Committee in its deliberations.

Sincerely,

Michael G. Baker, Q.C.
Minister of Justice

David M. Morse
Minister of Community Services

STATUTORY REFERENCES - GRANDPARENTS & ACCESS

	SPECIFIC RIGHTS	APPLICATION RIGHTS	TEST/CONSIDERATIONS IN APPLICATIONS	OTHER
Nova Scotia	_____	*Maintenance & Custody Act* s18(2) 'other person' with leave of court may apply for access (other person could include grandparent). *Child & Family Services Act* s47(2) ct may order access to "other person" unless 4 special situations exist (other person could include grandparent).	MCA s18(5) apply the principle that the welfare of child is paramount CFSA s3(2) (b) best interests of child, includes consideration of child's relationships with relatives s3(1)(t) relative means person related by blood or marriage	_____
Canada	_____	*Divorce Act* s16(1)(3) 'other person' with leave of court may apply for access (other person not defined)	*Divorce Act* s 16(8) best interests of child, including condition means, needs & other circumstances of the child	
Quebec	*Civil Code of Quebec* Article 611 Parents may not interfere with personal relations between child & grandparents		?	
British Columbia	*Family Relations Act* s 35(1) + 35 (1-1) Court may order access to grandparents (quare Rt to apply?)	*Child Family and Community Service Act* 56 (1) If continuing custody order exists 'any person' may apply for access to child (any person not defined)	FRA s 24 (1) (c) + 24 (1.1) best interests of child, includes love & affection & similar ties that exist between child & grandparents CFCSA 56(3) best interests of child + plan of care + wishes of age 12 child	
Yukon		*Childrens Act* s 33(1) grandparent may apply for access	*Childrens Act* s 30(1)(a) (iii) All the needs & circumstances of the child including bonding, love, affection and emotional ties between child and grandparents involved in the care & upon of the child and s 30(1)(g) the effect that awarding custody to one party would have on ability of other to have reasonable access to the child	

STATUTORY REFERENCES - GRANDPARENTS ACCESS

	SPECIFIC RIGHTS	APPLICATION RIGHTS	TEST/CONSIDERATIONS IN APPLICATIONS	OTHER
Alberta		*Provincial Court Act* s 19(2) If refused access grandparent may apply to court for access order *Child Youth and Family Enhancement Act* s 31 (4) (a),34(8) If no agreement with Director, 'other person' with whom child has significant relationship may apply for access CYFEA s41 (1) (b) 'other person' requires consent of court to appear and make representations to court	*Provincial Court Act* s 19 (4)(a) best interests of child, reference to needs and other circumstances of child including nature & extent of child's past association with gp	CYFEA s39 Order under this *Act* trumps order under other Acts re access PCA s 19(7) offence to contravene access provision in order PCA s 19 (5) all costs reasonably related to access visits to be borne by grandparent.
New Brunswick		*Family Services Act* s 129(3) Upon application Court may order any person shall have access to a child s 1 "immediate family" when used in reference to any person includes (a) a grandparent of the person	*Family Services Act* s 129(3) + s1 best interests of child which includes love, affection and ties that exist between child and where appropriate, grandparent.	*Family Services Act* s132(4) applications for access under 'private part of *Act* may be made in conjunction with any other application
Newfoundland		*Children's Law Act* s27 + 69(4)(b.1) grandparent, as defined 'other party' may apply for access	*Children's Law Act* s31 best interests of child all needs & circumstances of child including love affection & emotional ties between child and person claiming access and relationship by blood or adoption between child and each party to application	*Children's Law Act* s41 wrongful denial of court ordered specific access entitles party to apply for relief (except for *Divorce Act* orders) s46 punishment for breach of access orders
P.E.I.		*Custody Jurisdiction and Enforcement Act* s 4(1) "other person" may apply for access order (not defined)	CJEA s15 best interests of child	

STATUTORY REFERENCES - GRANDPARENTS & ACCESS

	SPECIFIC RIGHTS	APPLICATION RIGHTS	TEST/CONSIDERATIONS IN APPLICATIONS	OTHER
ıtario	_____	*Children's Law Reform Act* s 21 Any 'other person" may apply for access order (other person not defined) *Child and Family Services Act* S58(2) (b) any other person may apply for access order (not defined)	CLRA s24(2) best interests of child, including needs & circumstances of child, relationship by blood or adoption btwn child and party to the application (note: expanded definition of bestiInterests of child awaiting proclamation. It includes love, affection and emotional ties btwn child and person seeking access) CFSA s37(3) best interests of child, including child's relationship by blood or through adoption.	
skatchewan	_____	*Children's Law Act* s6(1) 'other person' with sufficient interest may apply for access order *Child & Family Services Act* s23(1) a person designated by court as having sufficient interest in a child may become a party to a protection hearing respecting that child (defined in s2(1) (o) as person designated by courts to be a person having sufficient interest in a child pursuant to s23)	CLRA s9(1)(a)(I) best interests of child, and take into account the quality of the relationship that the child has with the person seeking access CFSA s 37 (4) (a) best interests of child and (a) shall take into account the quality of the relationships that the child has with any person who may have a close connection with the child	CLA s12 where child is subject to CFSA and access applic made under CLRA certain stays & joinder & service rules apply CLAct pt iv Access order enforcement
anitoba		*Child & Family Services* Act s1 +78 grandparent as"family" member who is otherwise unable to apply for access under this or another *Act* may apply to court for access to child CFSA s1-1 definition of family includes grandparent	CFSA s2(1) best interests of child	

Legislative Committees Office
House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

3rd Floor, Dennis Building
1740 Granville Street
PO Box 2630, Station M
Halifax, Nova Scotia
B3J 3N5

Mr. John E. S. Briggs
Executive Director and General Counsel
Law Reform Commission of Nova Scotia
1484 Carlton Street, 2nd Floor
Halifax, Nova Scotia
B3H 3B7

Thursday, November 24, 2005

Dear Mr. Briggs,

I am writing to you in my capacity as Chair of the Standing Committee on Community Services to urge the Law Reform Commission to undertake the issue of grandparents' rights in Nova Scotia.

It is the Committee's understanding that both the Departments of Justice and Community Services have been in discussion with the Commission concerning this issue.

I am attaching a copy of a transcript from a meeting that the Committee had with the Grandparents Rights for Nova Scotia Association on Thursday, March 31, 2005. I have also enclosed information from the Departments of Justice and Community Services that was sent to the Committee in conjunction with a request.

If the Commission has any questions concerning this request, please feel free to contact us at anytime.

Thank you for your consideration in this matter.

COPY

Sincerely

for Ms. Marilyn More
Chair – Standing Committee on Community Services

cc. Grandparents Rights for Nova Scotia Association

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APPENDIX V

Youth In Care Newsletter Project

Legislative Committees Office
House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

3rd Floor, Dennis Building
1740 Granville Street
PO Box 2630, Station M
Halifax, Nova Scotia
B3J 3N5

Hon. David Morse
Office of the Minister
Department of Community Services
8th Floor, Nelson Place
5675 Spring Garden Road
Halifax

Tuesday, June 14, 2005

Dear ~~Mr. Minister~~ David:

Recently the Standing Committee on Community Services held a meeting with the participants of the Youth-in-Care Newsletter Project. A motion was passed at this meeting which reads as follows:

The Standing Committee on Community Services would like to encourage the Department of Community Services to continue their financial support of the Youth-in-Care Newsletter Project through the Canada Nova Scotia Skills and Framework Committee.

It is the hope of the Committee that this matter will be given serious consideration during the budgeting process. Thank you for your attention in this matter.

Sincerely,

Marilyn

Ms. Marilyn More, MLA
Chairman - Standing Committee on Community Services

Printed on paper that contains recycled fibre

Nova Scotia

Department of Community Services
Office of the Minister

PO Box 696
Halifax, Nova Scotia
B3J 2T7

Our File Number:

JUL 2 1 2005

Ms. Marilyn More, MLA
Chairman - Standing Committee on Community Services
Legislative Committees Office
P.O. Box 2630, Station M
Halifax, N.S. B3J 3N5

Dear Ms. More:

Thank you for your letter of June 14, 2005, regarding the Standing Committee on Community Services motion with respect to the financial support of the Youth-In-Care Newsletter Project.

Although the Youth-In-Care Newsletter Project has received funding through the Canada Nova Scotia Skills and Learning Framework for the past two years, the project does not meet the employability criteria of that program. Therefore, funding will likely not continue through that avenue. However, we understand the value of the Youth-In-Care Newsletter program and the opportunities it provides, so our Department is prepared to explore alternative sources for funding.

A request has been made to staff to investigate the possibility of continuing financial support under our Direct Grants program. A member of our Regional Office will be in contact with Mr. Andrew Safer, Project Manager, to discuss project details and funding requirements.

Thank you, again, for your letter.

Sincerely,

David

David M. Morse

c: Gary Porter, Regional Administrator, Central Region

Printed on paper that contains recycled fibre

Legislative Committees Office
3rd Floor, Dennis Bldg.
1740 Granville Street
P. O. Box 2630, Station "M"
Halifax, Nova Scotia
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Fax : (902) 424-0513
E-Mail : legcomm@gov.ns.ca

Web-Site : http://www.gov.ns.ca/legislature/COMMITTEES/services.html